

The Resurrection Project
Easter, 2021
Maple Grove UMC
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When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

I remember the moment that I believed in Jesus as the Messiah. The grown up and realizing this for myself, kind of belief. It was Christmas Day, and I was on my way to the airport. And Handel's Messiah came on the radio, and tears started flowing, and I had to pull the car over, and sobbed. I released myself from doubt and just I sort of fell into a place of peace. Of assurance that Jesus is who he says he is.

I didn't understand it all, still don't, and I wondered, still, about forgiveness, how that works, and how a broken body disappear and rise into spirit.

Forgiveness, Brokenness, Resurrection. The counterpoints to our themes this season: Confession, Mending and Rising

Confession and forgiveness is hard, hard even to understand why we need it.

I remember being a girl at the Good Friday services in Richwood, where my father was the pastor. I would hear the women in the balcony sobbing as the story was told and as *Were You There* was sung.

And I didn't understand it, that lament, that sense of participation in Christ' suffering, that sense that we, too, are accountable. But in my late middle age, I'm starting to get it.

When we drive our cars into each other and kneel on each other's necks and knock each other down or don't help each other up, we need to confess.

This great racial reckoning we're part of. This old, old stuff that has remnants in us, not of our making, but ours to acknowledge, we need to confess.

The prophets told us, that, before we can rise, we have to kneel, kneel in honesty confessing who we are to say, *God, I know that I am your creature and I want to live a life of meaning and grace. Help me with my stuff. Show me your way.*

And then to be about the mending. Mending is like confessing. It is uncomfortable.

Have you had a broken bone or had a serious surgery? The knitting back together of flesh and bone is miraculous, but also painful.

Maybe it was so for Jesus, too, as his bruised and bloodied and broken body, bound in those linen clothes began to be released into spirit.

But then, Mending is about releasing, isn't it? Allowing ourselves or helping others to be released from that which binds, that keep us in our tombs. That keeps us in darkness.

In Jewish mysticism, there is an expression *Tikkum Olam, The repair of the world. Comes from a rabbi's vision that God created a primordial vessel, into which God poured God's light but the vessel was not strong enough*

to hold that power, and so the vessels shattered into shards that pierced the world and scattered the light.

And the work of God's creatures is *tikkum* - to gather together those sparks of light and to help repair the vessel that is the earth. The shards that hurt are embedded in each of us, but also the sparks of light they carried.

Jesus keeps trying to tell us that. That the kingdom is here, that light, is here. That we are children of the light, that we can come together and help one another see it in themselves.

Jesus saw it in the ordinary people from all walks of life. He saw it in Mary of Magdela and the woman with the flow of blood, and the man born blind, He even saw it in Judas who betrayed him. In Peter who denied him.

All part of the kingdom, all with shards in their bones and light to bring forth to repair the world. That's a fearsome thing, isn't it?

We heard Mark's account at the tomb this morning, but we haven't yet heard the last words he wrote. That after they saw that the tomb was empty and the messenger told them to *go and tell the other disciples, then, Mark says:*

The women said nothing to anyone for they were afraid! Fearful perhaps of the power of God to resurrect, or that the one they loved was more than they thought he was, fearful that they wouldn't be believed, or that others would fear the power of Jesus even in death and endanger them.

They'd come to grieve and been given a fearsome mission. And they were quiet for a time, but at some point they accepted the mission and they told the story. The story in music that I heard as I was driving to that airport and that we heard today.

And if we take it on, this constant work of confessing and mending, unbinding, healing, rising. Those shards, those sparks of light are in us, too!

You are God's Resurrection Project.

Jesus lived and died that that you might know that. Say that in your heart. *I am God's resurrection project. Whatever that means for you, for one you loved. Perhaps in this life, perhaps healing that is beyond death* and if it's you, then it's also me, and it's for those we discard.

In a moment we are going to reaffirm our baptism. We are invited again, to say yes. Yes to the confessing, and to the mending and to the rising, for your sake, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake. Halleluia! Amen.