

Who Will We Tell?

By: Meagan McLaughlin

April 4, 2021. Pastor Meagan's sermon for this Easter Sunday is on the fear felt by Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and John when they went to the tomb and found that Jesus wasn't there. What would we have thought had we been there?

Readings: [Acts 10:34-43](#), [1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#), [Mark 16:1-8](#)

*** Transcript ***

Last Sunday, when we gathered for Palm Sunday Worship, we had a parade to celebrate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem — and some of us took that parade down Lockwood, too. And Easter is another opportunity to celebrate with a procession. Many of you have probably heard the Judy Garland & Fred Astaire song, "In your Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it / You'll be the grandest fella in the Easter Parade." So on Palm Sunday, we kept in mind as we walked where we were headed — into the city, where Jesus would be arrested, tortured, and die on the cross. And this Easter Sunday, this morning as we gather with joy to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, it's important to remember where we've come from.

Our Easter story, as joyful as it is as Mr. Jesse pointed out, doesn't begin with hope. It begins with an acknowledgement of death and profound loss. The women — Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and John — who went to the tomb that morning bearing spices, were there when Jesus died. They knew he was gone, and they didn't have the slightest expectation that he had survived everything that had happened. They were drawn to the tomb that morning not by the thought that Jesus might be alive, but by the call of their faith to honor one that they had loved and followed by anointing the body that was left. They were there because they were not afraid to face the grief and reality of the tomb.

Pastor Luisa Cabello Hanse of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis shared her experience of Holy Week and Easter during her childhood in Chile and Mexico at a Lenten Wednesday service a few years ago, and she told of the parade that they always had every year through town — on Good Friday, not Easter Sunday. Pastor Luisa said that Jesus' resurrection meant so much more when she first took time to acknowledge the reality of his death.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and John faced the grief, they approached the tomb, and there in the place of death they saw evidence of the miracle. The stone, as large as it was, had been rolled away. A young man, sitting in the otherwise empty tomb, was waiting to tell them the good news: Jesus is alive. What would you have thought, had you been there? Each of the gospels tells the story a little differently, as Dr Neidner pointed out in our forum a couple of weeks ago. In Mark's telling, the women do not instantly believe, and in fact the women who had courageously faced the tomb are so frightened by the announcement of Jesus' resurrection that they leave with the intent of not telling anyone what had happened.

All of us who have been through wounded-ness, death, and grief know resurrection does not erase the tomb. We all grieve loved ones who have died, losses brought to us by the pandemic, all of those things about church that we miss, the damage wrought by the sins of racism, poverty, and violence. Death is real, and the process of grief lasts a lifetime. Hope, new life, and joy grow slowly as healing continues.

So it's not so surprising to think that the women were not ready to embrace the hope and joy of the good news and go out to tell everyone what's happened the first minute they're told that Jesus is alive.

And yet we know that eventually they did tell the story of the resurrection, if only because today we are still telling of the miracle that they found when they went to the tomb that first Easter morning. This Easter morning, we are gathered to tell again of how God brought life out of death, and Jesus who has died is now alive again among us.

And today, most appropriately, we celebrate the baptism of Mae Lenhart. From the story of creation when God spoke earth and water into being, to the story of Noah and his family traveling through the flood in an ark and finding dry land to start a new life, to the Israelites crossing through the raging water of the Red Sea to find freedom on the other side, to Jesus' baptism in water by John when God claimed him as beloved, water has always been a part of our story as people of faith. Baptism with water and the words of God's promise reminds us that nothing can separate us from God. In baptism, we claim the promise of who we are — children of God, beloved, called and sent, to embody and proclaim the love and mercy of God for the world.

As we celebrate Mae's baptism on this Easter Sunday of the resurrection, we remember that we too have been through death and grief, and we too have been baptized, and that God's promises prevail even in the face of death. We are all chosen, all called, all sent, to share the good news that in Christ, death will never be the final word. The women were afraid, and we may be too, but Paul in his letter to the Corinthians reminds us that Christ is with us even in our fear, and however unworthy we may feel, we are beloved and called to share the good news. On the other side of horror, loss, and grief, Jesus has come, and we have discovered hope and joy.

How would you have told the story to the others who were waiting back in that Upper Room to hear about the visit to the tomb? What would you have thought, if you were one of Jesus' other followers, hearing the story of Christ's resurrection? What are you afraid of today? And who are you called to tell of this miraculous, radical hope? Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Thanks be to God.

*** Keywords ***

2021, Christ Lutheran Church, Webster Groves, sermon, podcast, transcript, YouTube, video, Pastor Meagan McLaughlin, Acts 10:34-43, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Mark 16:1-8, Easter Parade, Irving Berlin, Jesse Helton, COVID-19, pandemic, coronavirus