



Calvary Presbyterian Church
Sunday, April 9, 2023

EASTER SUNDAY: "New Dawn. New Day. New Life. For Us!"
Pastor Eyde Mabanglo

SCRIPTURE

Today's gospel reading is John 20:1-18/New Revised Standard Version.
Let us listen to what the Spirit is saying to us today:

The Resurrection of Jesus

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the

body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.
¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."
¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).
¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

May the Spirit bless this, God's Holy Word. Amen.

SERMON

*Prepare to cast off! Watch the dinghy!
Stow the lines! And the fenders!
Tighten the hatches! And brew some coffee!
Because we are leaving the harbor! Right now!*

That's pretty much what I was saying that misty August morning in 1997 as I was racing due south on a small sailboat to Victoria from Bedwell Harbor -It's now called Poet's Cove. You see this was over 25 years ago. And if I do the math for you, I was 7 months pregnant that August with our daughter Jessica.

So why was I the skipper of a 27-foot sailboat when I was 7-months pregnant? Well, that's a funny story...

STORY: [Pender Islands, Peace and Panic!]

3 boats plus one, skipper needed/OBGYN approved.

my boat was equivalent to a rent-a-dent--smallest, slowest, least equipped.

gray flannel blanket of fog/dread.

first message--we are going to Roche Harbor. ***Thank God.***

second message--and we're following you. *Oh God.*
AND...the compass rose was spinning out of control

Maybe you've found yourself living in that moment between Thank God and Oh God. We all have experienced a looming darkness or a blanket of fog that confuses our direction in life. The loss of a job. The loss of a friendship. The loss of a loved one. There was indeed a grief-filled blanket of fog draped over Mary, The Magdalene, on that first Easter morning. She came to the tomb carrying the weight of spices she had prepared for their friend's body. She came with the weight of sorrow and loss surrounding her. She could not see what this all meant--why her friend, her brother, her beloved teacher of all things holy was now dead. Then, I can't imagine her dismay and confusion when she could not find the body.

This is one of the first Easters that we've been able to worship together again following the shutdown due to COVID. There has been a palpable hopefulness in our being able to return to our communities and our worship spaces. I know that you feel it, but there is still a weariness as well. And in the recent passing of some loved ones, we know that grief always be a part of our Easter stories.

Even as people of profound faith...even as Easter people...If we are honest with ourselves...and let's be honest with ourselves--We find it all so bewildering; We are Easter people, yet we can lose our bearings and although we may sense that we are still moving, we eventually confess that we are indeed adrift more times than we care to admit. Even pastors find themselves adrift...

What can compound the anxiety of such a circumstance is another sobering revelation--the suddenly clear realization that we are the pastor, we are the leader AND there are others who are intent on following...us! Some of us signed up for this/others did not.

But (no matter our circumstances, our stage in life, or our spiritual beliefs) we often find ourselves in uncharted waters, uncharted territory, and uncharted stories. And since we are not God, we find ourselves wondering which way to go...Leaders must BE STILL long enough to discern the WAY in such a moment lest they unintentionally lead others away from the WAY.

If Jesus has put us in a position of leadership, then our job is to lead, and God will always be the Way as well as the Destination.

AND...dear friends of Calvary Presbyterian Church...dear Easter People of the Plateau and beyond—It may surprise you that you are a leader for such a time as this. For some it is obvious because we have titles like parents, grandparents, authors, teachers, bosses, directors, mentors and coaches, elders, officers of every kind. For others it may not be obvious, but --if you are honest with yourself--you are leading anyone who is watching you, listening to you, AND following you.

Our job is to lead the way to the one who is the way—to point to the one who is all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful.

SIDE-BAR: AND, Leading requires following. In the summer of 2018, there was a harrowing story about a young leader who needed to lead by following. Do you remember the enormous rescue mission in the flooded cave in Northern Thailand?

There is a terrific lesson on leadership in this story (as one trying to find a way while others follow), you can appreciate how this 25-year-old coach must have felt about this very dangerous situation. A father of one of the boys was asked by a reporter if he was upset with the coach, leading the boys into the caves. He said that he was not AND that this young man had shared all of his own food and water with the boys. Now, this young coach led the boys in remaining calm and focused on their rescuers' instructions.

I am reminded that even those in leadership need to humbly submit to the transcendent wisdom that surpasses them. He and the boys alike were at the mercy of the rescuers. He led them in his own following—not his own understanding, but acknowledging the experience, perspective, and wisdom of those trying to lead them out of the caves. Wise leaders do not lean on their own understanding alone...

This 25-year-old soccer coach led these boys in his own following...and we lead others to God, by following God. We are to be lead followers of Christ in all ways.

STORY: [Using new tools]

why follow me?

special equipment on board

normal navigation--three VISUAL bearings and a ruler parallel rulers and dead reckoning skills.

new navigation--walk by faith not by sight.

something new on our boat--GPS and an Eagle Scout named Jake!

As the fog covered us, encapsulated us, how much more so does God's perfect shalom and truth and presence and wisdom cover us countless times over and over. Even in John 20:1-18, even in the story of Easter morning, we have a beautiful story of how God reveals transcendent truth and wisdom in the midst of chaos and confusion. In the Luke version of the Easter story, the scripture says the women were puzzled, but a better translation would be *utterly lost* (like sitting on a sailboat in the fog, with a compass rose spinning out of control). I am grateful for a God who never leaves us...even when we feel quite lost.

We know what it feels like to be between O God and Thank God--paralyzed, overwhelmed, and stuck in our spiritual life, as a family, a church, a nation, and a world. The Easter story reminds us that God's presence and wisdom is always with us--in spite of the fog we find ourselves in.

Mary, the Magdalene, at the tomb found direction in the midst of her foggy circumstance that Easter morning. She found a rose...a compass rose! She was reminded of the words of her beloved friend and teacher, by the angels in dazzling clothes (and sometimes we need dazzling clothes to get our attention):

¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

Upon hearing her name, Mary was given her bearings...the uncharted mystery of what was happening was slowly coming into plain view. The fog of confusion was lifting, she could see the horizon of promise, of hope, of

resurrection. She could see a way through her lostness, she could feel the weight of grief and sorrow being lifted as she began to understand that her friend, her brother, her teacher, her God was alive. Yes, death will always be a part of the Easter story. And resurrection will always be a part of our story.

STORY: [to the harbor]

Jake yelled compass headings while the compass stopped spinning.
seeking a way through our fog.

fog lifts in the harbor.

more than the fleet following us—there were also canoes, kayaks,
pleasure boats, fishing vessels, etc.

¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

And Mary ran to tell the others about the empty tomb. No longer weighed down with burial preparations or the grief of loss and sorrow, she ran. And so shall we run to tell others that there is a Way out of foggy confusion, devastating chaos, needless wars, flooding caves, despair, sadness, hopelessness, and loss. And so shall we run to tell others that there is transcendent wisdom and dazzling truth beyond our mere understanding of most things. And so shall we run to tell others about empty caves, and empty tombs, because God wants to lead us in our leading others closer to God's self. So, on this Easter morning, we are being asked exactly who or what we are following lest anyone remain adrift.

We are not lost. We are Calvary. We are Easter people.

CONCLUSION

So...Prepare to cast off! Watch the dinghy!

Stow the lines! And the fenders!

Tighten the hatches! And brew some coffee!

Because we are leaving the harbor! Right now!

May it be so. May it be so.

