

He is Risen!
John 20:1-18
Rev. Krystal Goodger
April 05, 2015
Easter Sunday

Happy Easter! Today is the day that that we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A time when Alleluias fill the air. A time when we have the privilege to say,

Christ is Risen..... CHRIST IS RISEN IN DEED
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Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Welcome home everyone to this year's Easter celebration. We are so glad you have chosen to spend this part of your day with family and friends here at Brodhead United Methodist Church. It's good to gather once again in this holy space, to sing praises to God, and hear the Great Good News of Easter, in all of its mystery and glory. Once again we proclaim: Christ is Risen! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

Adam Hamilton, pastor of the Church of the Resurrection, wrote in an epilogue of one of his books: Every Easter people ask me: "Do you really believe this stuff? You're a smart guy. Do you really believe that Jesus rose from the dead?" I love his response, and I claim it for my own.

I not only believe it, he says--- I'm counting on it! I'm counting on the fact- that there is always hope. I'm counting on the fact- that God walks with us through hell and back again. I'm counting on the fact- that God forgives our sins and that he's the God of the second chance. I'm counting on the fact- that ultimately we don't have to be afraid. I'm counting on the fact- that sin and hate and sickness and death, will not have the final word. Yes friends, when we walk in the footsteps of the resurrected Christ, we walk with hope! And that is why we say: Christ Is Risen! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

Tempting as it is to try, it's a waste of time to try and EXPLAIN the resurrection. Let's face it, it's inexplicable! Some things cannot be reduced to an explanation, and are greatly diminished in the process of trying.

The task before us this Easter weekend is PROCLAMATION, not EXPLANATION, offering us an invitation to "walk through the door" into a new world, where the ultimate reality is not the death of all things, but that the God of love trumps death! So once again--- we have gathered to proclaim the ancient yet contemporary affirmation: Christ is Risen! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

Today is Easter Sunday, the highest holy day of the church year. So I want to make sure that what I say is not only inspiring, but is something that you can take home with you and remember. In order to do so, I am going to preach an old-fashioned, 3-point sermon. That is the traditional model of preaching. It is also very Trinitarian. According to my seminarian preaching professor, a preacher should always preach a 3-point sermon. It's like making sure your thesis paper has an intro, 3 points, and a conclusion. The pastor is supposed to fit every important scriptural matter into 3 easy-to-remember points. That way, the congregation will be able to hear it, go home and hopefully say: "Yes,

I still remember the 3 points of the sermon."

I do not always use a 3 point sermon. Ok, that's an understatement. I rarely use a 3 point sermon- just don't tell my preaching professor! But today, because it is Easter, I am sticking with the 3 points.

So here are the 3 points I have come up with... after great contemplation... on our Gospel text. Are you ready? My 3 points to my Easter sermon are: He is risen!..... He is risen!He is risen!
Each of these points are equally important, but I will begin with the first one. He is Risen!

Our Gospel reading begins on that first Easter morning. Now I want you to imagine, that you are Mary Magdalene. You are heading to the cemetery to the tomb to Jesus. What are you expecting to find? You are expecting to see a grave. In this case you are looking for a tomb, which would look like most tombs of the time. You are anticipating it to look just the way you left it.

You certainly would not expect the tomb to be open and the big stone rolled away! You certainly would not expect your friend or love one to be gone! And yet that is exactly what Mary encounters!

All of our Gospels- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have a version of this story. This event is highly dramatic in Matthew's telling of the story. There is a great earthquake and an angel descends from heaven. The guards who were watching over the tomb are actually so afraid that they pass out! Mark has 3 women coming to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus' body. In this version they arrive to the stone rolled away. When they enter to tomb they find a young man dressed in a white robe sitting there. Luke has the women and their spices greeted with a stone rolled away and no body inside. Then "suddenly" two men in dazzling clothes appear before them.

And then you have our version for today. John is a little less dramatic. Only Mary goes to the tomb. She finds the stone had been removed, but she does not go inside. She is so overcome with emotion she runs to tell Simon Peter. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb", she tells him.

Our story continues- Simon Peter and another disciple runs back to the tomb to see what all the fuss is about. I'm sure they thought that poor Mary was just so overcome with emotion that she was not in her right mind. But sure enough, when they arrive the tomb is open. Inside they see that Jesus is not there. The linen wrappings, which were around Jesus, are lying there. The "cloth that had been on Jesus' head" was rolled up. Believing that Jesus must have been raised, the two disciples return home.

The tomb is empty. That brings me to the first point of my sermon: He is risen!

Mary and the disciples have come to a place of death, yet there they found life! This is a game-changer... this is a life altering encounter for the Mary. The fact that Jesus is risen completely changes her world. Not even death could defeat her Lord. He is Risen!

This brings me to my second point: Remember the first point: He is Risen! The tomb is empty!
The second point is like the first: He is Risen!

The story continues...

Now Mary must have been beside herself. Simon Peter was supposed to fix things, get answers, but he left without answering her questions. Where was Jesus? Where did they put his body? Why can't she go to him? So Mary begins to cry, as you and I would if we were overwhelmed with emotion, lack of sleep, and confronted with a devastating scenario.

As she is standing there crying, two angels appear in the tomb. Then Jesus appears and asks her why she is crying. Supposing him to be the gardener, (so you can see how beside herself she was) she replies, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Then Jesus calls her by name and she sees him for who he really is!

He is Risen.... He is Risen.....He is risen bodily from the dead. Not only has Mary witnessed the empty tomb and the angels, but now she has experienced personally, the risen Jesus. For her, it is completely clear... He is Risen! Christ is risen! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

Which brings me to my third point: The First Point ...He is risen! The tomb is empty. The Second ... He is risen! She has seen Christ. Now the third point....He is risen!

Then Jesus said to Mary, "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.'"

Jesus is telling her to go and tell... Tell the disciples that he is risen. Tell the disciples that he is no longer dead. And so she responds. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord".

Go and tell, Jesus commands her. To Go and Tell. To share the Good News.

Rev. Jeffrey Smead writes, Jesus is clear he wants all to know the Good News; he is risen and death has been conquered. In the other Gospels, the angels tell the women or the disciples to go and tell others the good news. So the women go and tell, and those in turn who heard go and tell, and those that they share the news with in turn go and tell. And in this way, the message of Christ's resurrection is passed down throughout the ages, through the generations, to you and to me, this very day.

This Resurrection, this conquering of death, is not just for Jesus, but for every one... everyone who accepts and proclaims Jesus as their Savior. We have been given Good News and we are to go and tell, to share, the Good News. He is risen! He is risen! He is risen!

Can we fully comprehend even one of these points? Maybe not. The fact that Christ is risen may seem confusing to some, and unbelievable to others. Even though the Scriptures tell us that hundreds upon hundreds of men and women encountered the risen Lord.

What we can understand is that in the resurrection, God turned everything upside down. Jesus was put to death but God the Father said a resounding "NO!" to death by raising him from the dead. Sin and death were defeated. Everlasting life was made possible for all who know him as their Lord and Savior.

He is Risen! He is Risen! He is Risen! The tomb is empty.

I found this story that is so pertinent for this Easter day, for even children understand that something remarkable happened on this Glorious day:

Little Jeremy was born with Down's syndrome. Still, his parents had tried to give him as normal a life as possible. Springtime came, and the children talked excitedly about the coming of Easter. Their teacher told them the story of Jesus, and then to emphasize the idea of new life springing forth, she gave each of the children a large plastic egg with this assignment: "I want you to take this home and bring it back tomorrow with something inside that shows new life. Do you understand?"

All the children responded enthusiastically, "Yes, Miss Miller!" All of them, that is, except for Jeremy. He just listened carefully, his eyes never leaving the teacher's face. Had he understood what she had said about Jesus' death and resurrection? Did he understand the assignment? The teacher thought perhaps she should call his parents and explain the project to them, but she got busy and forgot.

The next morning, 19 children came to school, laughing and talking as they placed their eggs in a large wicker basket on Miss Miller's desk. After they completed their math lesson, it was time to open the eggs. In the first egg, Miss Miller found a flower. She said, "Oh yes, a flower is certainly a sign of new life. When plants peek through the ground, we know that spring is here." A small girl in the first row waved her arms. "That's my egg, Miss Miller," she called out.

The next egg contained a plastic butterfly, which looked real. The teacher held it up. She said, "We all know that a caterpillar changes and grows into a beautiful butterfly. Yes, that is new life, too." Little Judy smiled proudly and said, "Miss Miller, that one is mine!"

Next, the teacher found a rock with moss on it. She explained that moss, too, showed life. Billy spoke up from the back of the classroom. "My daddy helped me!"

Then the teacher opened the fourth egg. But the egg was empty! Surely it must be Jeremy's, she thought, and, obviously, he didn't understand her instructions. If only she hadn't forgotten to phone his parents. Because she did not want to embarrass him, she quietly set the egg aside and reached for another. Suddenly Jeremy spoke up. "Miss Miller, aren't you going to talk about my egg?" A bit flustered, the teacher said, "But Jeremy -- your egg is empty!" He looked into her eyes and said softly, "Yes, but Jesus' tomb was empty, too!"

Truly, the greatest symbol of new life is found in an empty tomb!

So before we leave today, let's review our points. The First Point ...He is risen! The tomb is empty. The Second ... He is risen! She has seen Christ. The Third point. He is risen! Go and Tell.

The greatest news of all this Easter, is the tomb was empty.... the tomb is empty. We have seen the risen Christ. Go and tell the world! Christ is Risen! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED! Amen.