



April 20 – Easter, Pastor Mike

Easter was always one of my favorite times each year. It was a time filled with a lot of family traditions. We would spend much of Saturday decorating cookies for Easter Day. We would spend time decorating eggs. We would go to the early service each year and then come home, change clothes, and get ready for a huge lunch together. In the absence of football games on TV, we would sometimes spend hours sitting around the table telling stories and enjoying time together. It was beautiful.

Decades later, the time of year feels different. It is still filled with joy and traditions. There are also waves of memories, and, well, grief. That seems to be the way that grief works. It comes in waves. Sometimes, it is completely unexpected, and it takes your breath away. Other times, like Easter, you know that it is coming. On a day that was once all joy, now it is found to be home to joy and grief, often at the same time. Sometimes, we try to run from grief. I find it better to lean into memories and grief. That pain is a reminder of the love that was shared.

The women in this Gospel account approach the tomb and find it was open. One can only assume that they thought the tomb was robbed. When the women get within view, they encounter two figures in dazzling white. They do not speak the words, “Do not be afraid.” Instead, they use an even more powerful phrase, “Remember how he told you.” This is not a question. The figures are not asking whether or not they forgot. It is a command to remember. This is a word used throughout scripture. It is not about forgetting. This is about placing something into focus. The women remembered. In this, they are now focused on what Jesus taught. It is as if the sky clears up.

I imagine that it was also a moment filled with joy and grief. They are hopeful and filled with joy. The words of Jesus may be true. He may be alive. The women are filled with hope and joy. I imagine the joy that they felt at being the first evangelists. These women were the first ones to hear the Good News. They are the first ones to share in this story.

At the same time, they are walking by faith while experiencing grief. They are literally carrying with them the spices for Jesus’ body. Then they returned to the other disciples to share this wonderful news. Grief returns as it is dismissed as an idle tale. The disciples not only refuse to listen, they think the women have gone crazy. Nobody would believe them. The only one curious enough to even check it out is Peter. Even then, it just says that Peter went home, amazed at what had happened.

Notice what is NOT in the text....Jesus. In this Gospel account, Jesus does not appear around the tomb, or to the disciples until later. All that has happened so far is based on remembering. It is the women remembering what Jesus had said. It is all based on faith, not sight. Peter tries to see, but he too is left in amazement and remembering what Jesus taught.

The same is true for us. If we look for visible proof, we will not find it in the ways that we hope to find it. We hear the story. We may hear it and be amazed. We may hear it and feel joy, maybe grief, maybe both...all of the above. That is the beauty of the story of the resurrection in Luke, it is not explained, “amazed” is never unpacked. We are left with wonders about what may come next.

On Good Friday, I spoke of looking at Jesus’ burial as a planting of love. As with anything that is planted, you eagerly await the day when the sprout begins to be seen. Friends, today is that day. We don’t gather today with all the answers. We don’t gather in all joy, or all grief. We gather here today to share in a story of new life. We gather today to see this sprout of love coming up out of the soil. We gather to celebrate all of the possibilities that are before us because of God’s love for us, and for all. Now, how will we respond to such love? Amen.

Pastor Michael Schmidt