

Sermon for Trinity

Easter, 2024

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and 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. They 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." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

Have I told you this story? Over sixty years ago or so, I was in third grade. The occasion was a fine spring morning, right about this time of year, Easter. Our family was sitting at breakfast and my father turned to me and asked me to go out to the garage and bring back a particular tool. This was a cause of great alarm for me because I had no strong idea what tool my dad had in mind. My Dad was a master mechanic in the airline industry and even at home he had massive toolboxes, taller than me, filled with tools. I'm sure he said the name of the tool but what I heard was something like, "three quarter inch skizzel tod." Gripping my childish courage, off I went to the garage.

I raised the door and stood there, staring at the toolboxes. I moved some things that were in my way and did my best to find a "three quarter inch skizzle tod" and to bring it back to the house. To my surprise, both he and my mother were smiling. "Nope, that's not it" and they sent me back. I returned a second time to find them laughing. "Nope, not it" They sent me back for a third time and as I was moving the same items again, there it was—a bright red, I mean really red, brand-new bike. Looking back, I must have moved that bike two or three times while looking for the tool. I was so happy to get

that bike, I was stunned. Only as the years went by did I come to understand another kind of Easter gift—it's mighty difficult to find something new if you have an outcome already in mind. If we're open-hearted, we can have a remarkable discovery: I went for a three-quarter inch tool but came back with a prized bike. Mary went to the tomb to see the body of her master and came back with Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

One of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century once said to his students, "Tell me how you are searching, and I will tell you what you are searching for." If that sounds a bit circular, it was meant to be. Today, at Mary's arrival at the tomb, we can ask, how was she searching? She went to the tomb and though it was unexpectedly open, she bent to look inside. And for what was she searching? For the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

Over the previous months, time and again, Jesus had taught his disciples, including Mary, that they should believe that he would rise from the dead. As one of the Gospels reads, "He said all these things quite plainly!" And yet, when Mary first comes to the tomb, she is very surprised to find the stone rolled back. Didn't Jesus say that would happen? And then when Mary ran to tell the other two male disciples, the two run, look, and for whatever reason, return almost without comment. No shouts of discovery from those guys.

When Mary returns to the tomb, she meets a man she presumed to be the gardener, not realizing it is Jesus who's truly present. And this is the lesson for the Easter ages: remember, there has been no person Mary more longed to be with and know than Jesus and yet, when he's standing right in front of her, Mary can't see him. Why? Because she didn't expect him. She was, in a sense, looking elsewhere. This Risen Lord was far, far beyond her hopes and expectations. Mary had come to the tomb with the best that she had to offer and yet it is only when Jesus speaks to her that she recognizes at last who she had been searching for. Mary discovers what she really needs because Christ has found her. Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the new Creation, the new life that God has come into the world came for

Mary. Lesson learned—we know God only as God has come for us; search though we may, looking for the deepest meanings and the firmest hopes, we only have the tools we have. We can only find what we've been looking for. But God comes to us in faith and when he speaks our name, we will know the Living God. God finds us.

Now Mary can return to the other disciples, to all the people broken, or disappointed, fearing the worst. Now Mary can announce the hope of life and of our future. Now, Mary says, "I have seen the Lord." The Lord is Risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.