

"Living in the Moment on Easter Sunday"

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Trinitarian Congregational Church
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John 20:1-18

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. So 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." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

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). Jesus 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.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

I'd like to speak to you this morning on the subject of *"Living in the Moment on Easter Sunday."* *"Living in the Moment"* is one of my favorite concepts, because most of the moments of our lives are pretty good - and not just Easter Sundays. Most of the moments we have - at work, at school, at home and at play - most of those moments are pretty positive moments, when we embrace them and are fully present in them. It's when we're living backwards in yesterday or fast forward into tomorrow that we get bummed out or stressed out.

A. All too often we live in the past and not in the present. It might be the Glorious Past, the "Good ole days" past, or, it might be the Mistake-filled past, the "What Might have Been" the Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda Past. Either way it's living in the past and not fully alive in the present.

B. Others times we live in the future. Sometimes it's with big, big plans that we're hoping will happen when our ship comes in, and then we'll finally be happy. I like the country song that says, *"When my ship finally came in I was waiting at the train station."* Other times we live in the future by focusing solely on our endless "to-do" lists - worrying about the future, anxiously planning for the future and allowing the stress about tomorrow to contaminate today. We get so totally focused on tomorrow that we forget to live today! We live as if tomorrow has already come. We live its stress a day early - with repetitive, anxious thoughts over what might happen tomorrow. Jesus once said, *"Don't worry about tomorrow. Live today. Let tomorrow's worries live in tomorrow."*

If you're like me, it's easy to live in the past - either in its hurts or its successes. And, it's pretty natural to live in tomorrow, bringing the stress of tomorrow into today. But living in the moment, that's the greatest

challenge. What would it be like if we could truly live in the moment? - to be fully alive, fully present? Because that's where the best things in life are found. Joy is found in the moment. Love is found in the moment. Relationships need to be in the moment for intimacy to flourish. And God is found in the moment, in the precious presence, the Eternal Now of God. So what would it look like to live in the moment on Easter, from a Christian perspective - the greatest day of the year?

You know on that very first Easter Sunday, Jesus' followers had a hard time living in the moment, too. They had a difficult time getting to Easter. They of course had personally experienced the darkest of all days on Good Friday, just two days prior. And the deeper the wounds in our lives, the longer it takes for them to heal. And the more painful they are, the more paralyzing they can be. And we can get stuck. We can't blame Mary, Peter, Thomas and the others for being stuck. The excruciating pain of Good Friday at first prevented them from experiencing the joy of Easter.

So, Mary discovers that the body of Jesus is missing and she doesn't think resurrection. Instead she says, *"They've taking away the body of my Lord."* A few moments later when Mary actually meets Jesus in the garden, she doesn't even recognize him. She thinks it's the gardener. In Luke's Gospel, two of the disciples take a long, long walk with the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus - and they don't realize that it's Jesus walking with them. They were still living Good Friday - and who could blame them. Somebody tell them it's Easter! In Matthew's Gospel when the disciples see the Risen Lord in ch. 28, it says, *"some worshipped him and some doubted."* - "Is it really him? Am I seeing things?" Easter seemed too good to be true.

My point is that those who knew Jesus the best still struggled to live Easter. They failed to recognize the Risen Christ even when he was right before their very eyes. They were overwhelmed by the recent past and no doubt afraid for what the future might hold for them. This left them paralyzed with fear and grief, so much so that they were slow to see the greatest miracle of all. They had trouble living Easter - living in the moment on Easter Sunday. What would it look like for you and me to truly live Easter? - to live in the moment of

Resurrection?

It would mean that we'd celebrate, seek and honor the Living Christ. We would come to know Christ as companion and not just an important historical figure or a role model or teacher or martyr. John, the Disciple, ran to the tomb (which suggests anticipation and expectancy) and when he got to the tomb and saw that there was no body and that the linen burial cloths had been neatly rolled up, he didn't believe that the body of Christ had been stolen. Instead, he believed that Jesus was alive! To live Easter is to believe in a Living Savior, not a dead one. It's to believe in a Victorious Savior, not a defeated one. It's to believe in a personal presence, not just some stories in an ancient book or a distant echo down through the hallways of history.

Tony Campolo tells the story of a book his mother gave him when he was growing up. The book was Silver Trumpet by James Wesley Ingles. Tony read the book because his mother gave it to him and told him to read it, but it didn't really impress him very much. Several years later, Tony was a student at Eastern College in St. David's Pennsylvania, and his English professor was a man named James Wesley Ingles. Tony said he was one of the most "inspiring" teachers he ever had. - so much so that Tony went back and re-read the book Silver Trumpet. And this time he saw powerful insights in the book that he had missed the first time around. The difference of course was that he had met the author. And when you know the author, the book comes alive!

To live in Easter is to believe that Christ is alive today. That he's not just an historical figure to be studied, he's a person to be met. To live in Easter is to believe in St. Patrick's words: *Christ is before us, behind us, above us, below us, beside us, within us, all around us.* Alleluia!

John Knox, the found of the Presbyterian church, once put it this way: *"The early Christian church was not a memorial society with its eyes fastened on a departed master; it was a dynamic community created around a living and present Lord."* To live in Easter is to believe in and experience a Living and Present Lord. This is at the core of our faith.

That Christianity is not about living in the past - simply looking back at the ancient teachings and philosophies of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor is it simply looking forward to heaven and the sweet by and by. Christianity is living in the precious present with our Living Lord and our Ever-Present Savior. It's enjoying the presence, power and love of the Author of the Book.

Thanks be to God.

Let's pray:

Eternal God, help us to live each day to its fullest. Help us to live each day fully present to you and to those we share our lives with. In your precious and holy name we pray. Amen.