

Longing to be Found
John 20:1-18
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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer.

Sue Monk Kidd, writer/poet is credited with saying in her book, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, “The truth will set you free, but first it will shatter the safe, sweet way you live.”

The reality for us this morning is that the resurrection sets us free. It brings new hope, new beginnings, but first it will first shatter the safe, sweet way we live.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the garden tomb. The irony of this is that we walk with her, feeling the emotions of losing a loved one. Mary was lost in her grief, searching like all of us do when we lose something or someone, hoping that it will be returned in the same manner in which we lost it. As Mary moved toward the garden tomb, she wanted to be found.

Some years ago, a game of hide and seek was played in my former church by the junior high youth group. One of the members had it in his mind that he would hide so well that no one would ever find him. He knew the best hiding place ever within the church. There was an opening near the pedals of the organ that went underneath the choir area. That was the place where this youth group member hid among the dust, the spider webs and mice. If you are not familiar with this game, the whole group hides except one. That member begins the search. After she or he finds someone, the two of them continue the search until the whole group is looking for the final member. The final member was this young man underneath the choir floor. As the young man was in hiding, he

heard the voices of the group coming into the sanctuary, echoing closer and closer. The group looked and looked but he was nowhere to be found. Finally, after the group was exhausted from the search and they said to one another in the sanctuary, "Well, he's not here." And they all left. You can imagine how the young man must have grinned as he was lying in the best hiding place ever. Minutes crept by and he began to wonder whether he would be found. Finally, tired and a little worried that there may be mice underneath the choir area, he ran back to the church lounge and where the youth group was congregating. He asked, "What are you all doing in here?" One of the youth group answered, "We couldn't find you, and we got tired of looking. So I guess you win." He stood silent for a moment. Even though he had the best hiding place ever, he still wanted to be found. It was the emptiest of victories.

Robert Fulghum, in his book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, cites a similar childhood experience with this wisdom about the game hide-and-go-seek. He said: "In the end, whether they realize it or not, most people really want to be found." When Mary who was lost, lost in her grief, made her way to the garden tomb, she wanted to be found.

Those words dance off the pages of countless Easter sermons. In the resurrection, we encounter God's gift of grace. It means being found by a love that never stops looking for us. It is one of the most reassuring promises of faith in our world. Despite all the chaos around us, despite all the ways in which we have felt lost, we long to hear the sweet sound of grace wrapping itself around us. We long to be found.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the garden tomb. Reading these familiar words again this Easter, there is a scary twist about this text. Mary Magdalene is found; however, when a person is found in the way that Mary is found, that kind of being found can plunge us to places we don't want to go. Mary wanted to be found. It just was not the way in which she

wanted to be found. Yet, it is in those places that God identifies us by name (Mary) and sends us into ministry (Go tell my brothers.) in the most unlikely places of our lives.

In one of our confirmation sessions, we looked at the call of Moses and our calling as Christians in general. It is a story of being found. It is a story of liberation. Moses, who had escaped Egypt to tend the sheep of his father-in-law in Midian, wanted to find liberation for himself and for his people in Egypt but he didn't want to be found doing it. Yet, God found him and called him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Moses would have preferred that God just do it all by himself because Moses asked some self-deprecating questions: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me? O my Lord God, I have never been eloquent. . .but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. Please send someone else." Moses wanted to find liberation for his people but he didn't want to be found doing it.

I don't know about you but my ears got a little tired of the politicians who point out everything that is wrong with the United States. They come off as wanting to find solutions to some very difficult problems in the country but they don't want to be found doing any about it. They would rather wax in rhetoric and celebrate polarization.

Sometimes I wonder what are our faith expectations when we come to this Easter Service? Are we looking to be found? Or are we looking to be comfortable again? What is it for what we are looking? In concerning John's Gospel, I wonder "Is it possible that this resurrection narrative is luring us into a deeper realm to consider a different kind of alleluia, to risk catching sight of something we don't usually see? Could it be that John's narrative is nudging us toward the haunting depths of a more profound truth? You know that resurrection is more about surprise, fear and doubt than shouting, singing, dancing and mighty sound of the trumpet and the organ." Please don't take this wrong, I love the beauty of this

service. I love the singing of the congregation and choir. I love the mighty sound of the trumpet and organ only because it addresses my surprise, fear and doubt of the Easter message.

Early on the first day of the week, in the graveyard, Mary sees a gardener. Incredulous from the whole experience, questions tumble from her mind. Where have you laid him? I came here to anoint the body and grieve the loss of a loved one. What do mean he is not here?

Mary Magdalene came to the grave tomb determined to face her pain, no matter how dark and terrible it seemed. Now she has to deal with faith's language of being "alive again." What could that possibly mean? Then Jesus quells her trembling soul by calling her by name, "Mary." And Mary breathes a deep sigh of relief. It is the same feeling we experienced when we were lost as kids and when we heard the voice of our parent calling us by name.

Mary immediately has a desire to hold him, to celebrate him as he was rather than who he is. But Jesus says, "No, don't cling to me." Jesus taught her a shocking truth here: you cannot cling to love. You cannot hold or hoard it. In a suffering world and a world open to resurrected possibilities, there is no time to linger in the sacred moment like most of us want to do. Yet, we want to hold onto our families. We want to hold on to this church family. We want to hold on to this Easter Sunday celebration. We want to hold on to what we have instead of embracing the good news that every love must transfigure into ever-widening circles of compassion. Mary wanted to hold on but Jesus calls Mary to preach, to live out the love of Christ instead of clinging to it as if it were a possession.

For those of us who have children and if we really want to go deep enough, they do not belong to us but to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. We let them go because we cannot cling to love. For those of us who have been in this church for a number of years, and if we really want to

go deep enough, the church does not belong to us to our faithful, Savior Jesus Christ. When we cling to it, it dies. But when we share it, it lives and grows because we cannot cling to love. Jesus tells us as he told Mary, “Don’t cling me to me. Go and share the good news with all the world.” Invite those who have lost their way and who long to be found on the journey of faith through this Risen Lord Jesus Christ whom we celebrate today.

Early on the first day of the week, in the graveyard, Mary was longing to be found. Through God’s grace, she is found, she has not been forsaken, but the truth of what that means is bittersweet for her, it is against her logical mind, for she is called to a different life, not a familiar life, a life of sharing the love of Christ with the world.

As we walk with Mary this Easter, we too may be longing to be found but are we willing to embrace the resurrection message or cling to that which is familiar and comfortable. The truth is we are found, for we are called by name, called to a transformed life of sharing love with others instead of clinging on to it.

And so I end this sermon where I started: the truth, the truth of the resurrection, will set you free, but first it will shatter the safe, sweet way you live. Let us go forth from this place and announce the news. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!