

The Good News

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Easter Meditation

There are a variety of ways that we can approach scripture. We can look at the Bible as story or as history. It can be read as word or as Gospel. It can be taken literally or figuratively and as someone suggested it can also be envisioned as place.

The Bible is the place where we can meet God. When the Bible is discovered as place, it can be more than a writing to be examined; it can be a message to be lived out. When the Bible is place, we participate in the story not as detached observers, but as living members. Imagine if you will, today's Gospel passage as place. It is here that we enter into dawn on the first day of the week, the day in which it is believed creation began. The day before is the Jewish Sabbath, when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary refrained from labor in honor of the day God rested upon completing creation.

In Mark's account these woman not only carried their grief to the tomb, but arrived with aromatic spices, much like people do today, when they anoint a casket with fragrant flowers. In Matthew's explanation they are simply walking to see the tomb where Jesus lay.

We are told there is an earthquake and commotion, reminiscent of what was prophesied by Zachariah that "God would kick the Mount of Olives up against Jerusalem, increasing Zion's height and opening tombs."

Someone said that "unfinished business lingers on in every graveyard." Visiting the graveside of loved ones was a practice then as it is now. I have lived in three different homes with a view of a cemetery and have noticed the mixture of emotions brought into those places. There are longings and desires; good memories and regretful ones; hopes and misgivings.

It is hard to imagine the place where these two Mary's were in as they went towards the tomb. The trauma of the crucifixion, their sense of fear and betrayal must have weighed heavy. Some had broken their promise to be with him through the end, and their sense of failure and uncertainty was too much to carry.

They spilled their tears with only an ounce of hope left and a dash of faith. There was not only mourning, but remorse for not having lived up to his Word and perhaps even some anger for having been left behind, for their future looked dim. All of that stuff they carried with them to the point of no return. But now it was no longer of any usefulness because the tomb was empty, and there was no room for their grief.

Instead they find an angel sitting on the stone that was no longer a door to their anguish.

In past Biblical narratives in Genesis and in 2 Kings we are told that unbelievable good news comes at the entrance of a doorway.

Now here, clothed in white, the angel's words were like a lightning bolt: "Come see the place where he lay," as if to say, it is empty, and now you can empty all those feelings of unworthiness and judgment you've been carrying. Come and find there is no longer a place for your sadness. Because this tomb is no longer a place for mourning, it has become the shape of an altar for rejoicing. This tomb is not about death. It is about life. And your grief must be lifted up to the Lord of Life.

Sometimes happy endings are the hardest to accept. Sometimes we have to move on. The angel told them, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him."

Our destiny is no longer going to end up in the graveyard. Imagine, if you will, of being at a place where God calls you to go further. If God has so wondrously created life, so much will God miraculously restore, for belief

in the Resurrection is the reaffirmation that life is God given. If the beginning is good then, by God, the ending will be even better. For the Bible is the place where we meet God. It is where we hear Jesus say "Greetings!"

It is where we can move ahead and leave behind all those dead ends and where we can move on with the life God has made for us.

Upcoming Events

Special Easter Program Features Festive Music for Choirs with Ken Laing, Trumpeter

On Easter Sunday, April 12, at 10:00 a.m. the Adult and Junior Choirs will sing festive Easter music accompanied by Ken Laing, trumpet. The service will begin with a joint anthem by the Adult and Junior Choirs, "Hallelujah, Round of Praise," by Mozart. Easter selections from Handel's *Messiah* will be sung by the Adult Choir and soloists. Prelude and postlude music will include the well-known Easter hymns, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" and "Thine is the Glory," arranged for trumpet and organ. Please join us for this joyous service on Easter morning.

Holy Week/Easter Sunday Services

Holy Week marks the events of Christ's life beginning with His joyous triumphal entry into Jerusalem and ending with the somberness of crucifixion and death. The theme of Holy Week is one of passion, ultimate love and caring.

Tenebrae, Wednesday, April 8, 7:30 p.m. The name *Tenebrae* is the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows." At this evening service, we experience only a small portion of Christ's pain and suffering the day of His crucifixion. One of the most conspicuous features of the service is the gradual extinguishing of candles until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. As it gets darker and darker we can reflect on the great emotional and physical pain that was very real for Jesus that evening. Toward the end of the service, the Christ candle is hidden, typifying the apparent victory of the forces of evil over good. At the very end, a loud noise is made, symbolizing the earthquake at the time of his death (Matthew 27) and his resurrection (Matthew 28:2). At the moment of the earthquake, the temple veil was torn apart, making the Holy of Holies exposed to public view. This is understood to represent God's change toward us with direct access to him, no longer requiring the ceremonial acts of the priests for our forgiveness of sin. The hidden candle is then restored to its place, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. By this single light we all depart this service in silence.

Maundy Thursday, April 9, 7:30 p.m. We get the word *Maundy* from the Latin "mandate" to command. This service recalls two events in the life of Jesus. First, we recall the Last Supper when Jesus broke bread with the disciples in the Upper Room and said, "Do this for the remembrance of me." In the Eucharist we have the promise of Christ's presence with us. Secondly, we recall that Jesus washed the disciples' feet and commanded them to follow his example of love and humble service. In the foot washing we have the model of ministry of servant hood. At the conclusion of this memorable service, we strip the altar.

Good Friday—The Way of the Cross, April 10, 12:00 noon The devotion known as the Way of the Cross is an adaptation to local usage of a custom widely observed by the pilgrims to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, the pilgrims offer a prayer at a series of places traditionally associated with our Lord's passion and death. At Saint Mary's, the children of the parish will assist us in this service which includes walking throughout the parish grounds, observing moments of Biblical reflection and contemplative prayer. The service begins and ends in the church.

Good Friday Liturgy, April 10, 7:30 p.m. A solemn service beginning with a reading from the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John and followed by a service of evening prayer using the Solemn Collects which date from the third century. In these prayers is a bid to the congregation for silent prayer concluding with a collect. The service ends with Anthems said before the Cross and the Lord's Prayer.

Easter Sunday, April 12, 10:00 a.m. There will be no 8:00 a.m. service so that we can all celebrate together. Immediately following the 10:00 a.m. service, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt for grades K-6. Meet under the big tree on the front lawn. In the event of rain, Easter "goodie bags" will be distributed in the vestibule at the close of the service.

Editor: Tim Green