April 21st, 2019

Springfield Presbyterian Church

Easter Sunday

10:30 am

Finding Ourselves in the Resurrection

I. A Space for Celebration

 This morning, after six long weeks of lent, where we have journeyed through the winding roads of darkness and pain that lead to the cross at Calvary, we step into this moment – the moment we have all been aching for, the moment we get to share the good news. Let us hear the good news from the Scripture:

 From the Gospel of John, “The light shines in the

darkness, and the darkness has NOT overcome it.”

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia. Amen.

Today we come together, on the holiest of celebrations in our Christian faith, where we say that light and life conquers death, joy conquers grief, and pain will be no more when Christ’s Kingdom reigns. Today, we live in exceptionally good news – take that good news, let it fill your very being, your heart, and know that because of Christ’s sacrifice and magnificent resurrection, we are a free, beloved, and forgiven people. The good news does not get sweeter than that.

II. Entering into the Story

 As we hear our Gospel lesson, we remember this story – it is a story we hear year after year, longing to make some sense out of it and longing to connect ourselves to such a profound moment. There’s many ways of finding ourselves in the resurrection moment, and this morning we will do so through the lenses of those who came to the empty tomb.

III. The Beloved Disciple

 The beloved disciple: I imagine that the beloved disciple is both loved, but may not have the greatest following in the group of disciples. He’s like the straight A student, who on the surface you applaud, but on the other hand – it’s just annoying at some point, right? Get a B, just once, stop being so perfect. You’re showing us up, and while you’re a great example, you’re stressing us out.

 When the beloved disciple hears that Jesus is no longer in the tomb, like a superhero of sorts, he jumps and leaps into action. He gets into a footrace with Peter where though he beats Peter to the tomb, it’s Peter who is the one who goes in – so I guess Peter wins on a technicality. But the beloved disciple is there, jumping into action, longing to see the prophecy playing out.

 There’s always a beloved disciple, or a few, in a church community – or really, any community you find. You know the folks – people who can manage to take a negative situation and somehow use rosy-coloured glasses to see the beauty and positivity in what seems hopeless. They have boundless optimism – they can see resurrection, and life, and hope everywhere they look. For many of us, perhaps this boundless optimism is frustrating, because that’s not where we are in life – but actually, in truth, in the depths of our hearts, we are really cheering that boundless optimism on. We hope, we pray, that their boundless optimism comes to fruition.

 Perhaps you are the beloved disciple – perhaps you see the beauty where you walk – perhaps you see dandelion weeds and see potential, perhaps you look at the streets of Baltimore, you see possibility and renewal. We need our beloved disciples, we need you – to show us resurrection when we find it difficult to see things anew.

II. Peter

 And how about Peter. My goodness, I love Peter – probably because I feel like he is such an honest and human disciple. Peter is a holy, hot mess of a disciple – he gets in trouble early on trying to save Jesus, he denies Jesus, seemingly unconsciously, but he wants to badly to be the perfect disciple. He just...he just doesn’t go about it in the right way. And there’s something in Peter that we can all relate to – that desire to be more faithful, more willing to follow God, more hopeful – but he shares with us that frank fallibility that any one of us can feel in this journey we call faith.

 There are Peter’s out there – and if I’m fully vulnerable, I’m probably one of them. I long to save my savior, I don’t get it right all the time, and I get jealous of the beloved disciple. But yet, in the quiet moments, in an empty tomb, in the silence, there are Peter’s out there who can see a new day dawning and usher in resurrection even though bewildered. We need our Peter’s in this community – who strive and hope and are willing to take risks and be fallible but who are completely in love with God and seeking to follow God’s way.

IV. Mary speaks

 And then there is Mary Magdalene, who we hear most about in this resurrection story. She is bereft with grief. A favourite quote of mine comes from Jamie Anderson, saying, “Grief is really love with no place to go.” And there Mary is, blinded by her grief, by her very sense of love that has no outlet – love that feels shattered and broken and seemingly hopeless. The archangels may appear, but it’s going to take a bold move to take the blinders off of Mary’s eyes – Jesus himself has to bodily be right there, in front of her face. At first, she can’t see him, the grief is too sharp, but then with this epiphany moment where joy rises up in ways unexplainable, she sees her savior. And she wants to hug him – and I would too! You want to hold onto the very thing you think you’ve lost.

 Yet Jesus tells her to go – go and send the news that I have risen, risen indeed. And Mary’s grief turns to joy, and she finds her voice and the commission to go out and tell all whom she encounters.

 Have you ever experienced that Mary moment – that moment where you think to yourself, ‘It’s daring, it’s risky, it’s vulnerable – but I have something I need to share.” When I say from the pulpit to go and be a disciple yourself, to go and share the good news, I am not naïve – I am fully aware that it is hard, it is scary, and it can feel incredibly uncomfortable to say to your neighbor, friend, or relative – there’s something here in Christ that I can find no other place, and because of that, my life has been changed forever. We need our Mary’s – we need to be encouraged to speak the truth and sense the commission and call on our hearts to share that life in Jesus changes everything.

V. Whoever you are

 You and I fit into the resurrection story – whether you are the beloved disciple who sees resurrection everywhere, or Peter who struggles, but does so honestly, and is redeemed through resurrection, or Mary who finds her voice that calls her to share this good news of resurrection with all whom she encounters. We fit into the resurrection story – we find ourselves there – may you find yourself there today.

 May you feel the profound love of Christ in seeing resurrection moments today and everyday. May you know that darkness, whatever darkness that may be, will always be overcome by the light of Christ. And may you count yourself as blessed to be a part of this story, looking for resurrection in your journey and sharing the good news in your own way, wherever you go. For Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia. Amen.