

John 20: 19-31 Second Sunday of EASTER, 04192020, saint aidan's

**The MESSAGE BIBLE**

**1** Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance.

**2** She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, breathlessly panting, "They took the Master from the tomb. We don't know where they've put him."

**3** Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb.

**4** They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter.

**5** Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in.

**6** Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there,

**7** and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself.

**8** Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed.

**9** No one yet knew from the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

**10** The disciples then went back home.

**11** But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb

**12** and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid.

**13** They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?" "They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him."

**14** After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

**15** Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?" She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

**16** Jesus said, "Mary." Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

**17** Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

**18** Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her.

**19** Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you."

**20** Then he showed them his hands and side.

**21** Jesus repeated his greeting: "Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you."

**22** Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," he said.

**23** "If you forgive someone's sins, they're gone for good. If you don't forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?"

**24** But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

**25** The other disciples told him, "We saw the Master." But he said, "Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won't believe it."

**26** Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you."

**27** Then he focused his attention on Thomas. "Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don't be unbelieving. Believe."

**28** Thomas said, "My Master! My God!"

**29** Jesus said, "So, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing."

**30** Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book.

**31** These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.

I am struck how many times the word “fear” has occurred in these last two Sundays of Easter: “Locked for fear” [and, contemporaneously, **we are** all locked at home for fear] and ”the doors were locked shut and Jesus came and stood among them.’ [though our homes are locked, Jesus can come and stand among us, and this depends on each of us] AND, “For fear of the Angel, the guards shook and became like dead men. The Angel said to the women “do not be afraid”. “The disciples took hold of Jesus’ feet and worshipped him /and Jesus said, ‘do not be afraid’.”

Sounds like Jesus is telling us, “do not be afraid.” Sounds like we too have to trust in the resurrection while the world is in fear. We have to talk about the resurrection while the world is fearful and suffering. These two things I am reflecting on: the cross of suffering and the joy of resurrection. The tragedy and suffering that is happening all around us, and the joy that we felt on Easter Sunday. This is a difficult time for everyone. I’ve always thought I understood Good Friday. But the suffering of Good Friday, I believe I now understand more than ever. I’ve always thought I understood Good Friday, but this year, I **feel** the suffering of Good Friday. This year, I feel it. I feel it as a spiritual truth. Father Richard Rohr says: “Sooner or later, the heart of everybody’s spiritual problem are these 3 questions: “What do we do with our pain? Why is there evil? Why is there suffering?” We’ve all heard of the “suffering of Job”, and the “patience of Job”. In the Hebrew Book, Job begs God for an answer to this mystery, and Job can’t get one. Job only begins to trust when he no longer feels ignored, when he knows that God is taking him seriously and that Job is “part of the conversation”(see Job 42). When Jesus later *becomes* the answer in his own passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus discovers what Job finally experienced~ in the midst of suffering, God can be trusted. The world is still safe, coherent, and even blessed. This year I feel the breadth and the depth of the suffering of Good Friday as a life experience.

WE ALL ARE experiencing the joy of the resurrection while the world is in pain and we know this is not the end of things. When we hear the resurrection story in Matthew, listen to how many times the word, “fear”, is said. Notice how many times fear is mentioned, how many times someone is experiencing fear. And a being from a spiritual reality, an angel from God says, “do not be afraid,” said twice by the angel and then once by the risen Jesus, “do not be afraid.”

It’s hard for all of us to not feel a little bit afraid of the suffering that is going on in our world right now. We Christians have no desire to suffer, but we do appreciate the **power** of suffering. We all suffer. Suffering is democratic, it includes everyone. Victor Frankel, a holocaust survivor, said we can choose what we do with suffering. Suffering breaks some people; whereas, suffering **breaks open** others. Suffering stretches us. Suffering breaks some people while it breaks others open, Frankel says. I believe this present suffering is stretching our souls to greatness. Listen again to what Peter has to say about suffering: “in this you rejoice, even if now for a little while, you have had to suffer various trials so that the genuineness of your faith being more precious than gold, that though

perishable, is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” What is our experience of suffering doing to us? Is it breaking us? Or what is it breaking open in us? What will we look like on the other side of this? Are there things we will value more than ever? I’m aware of all the people we take for granted... and I’m learning to appreciate them more, and I’m becoming more aware of the people who work at our grocery stores and our hospitals, the people who serve the sick and the needy. I’ve never appreciated them as much as I do now. On the other side of this pandemic, I think we will all appreciate people more.

This is the time to refresh and slow down. Maybe this will all be good for us? I have found how much I value “meaning”. Meaning is that which is intended to communicate what is not directly expressed. How much more I value my life; it only took me 70 years. I remember in seminary, there were 4 values that the school stood for: breadth, balance, scope, and depth. (1)Breadth [the wideness of God’s love, the wide range and inclusiveness of our church and our love for each other], (2)balance [An even distribution of weight enabling someone or something to remain upright and steady; to keep or put something in a steady position so that it does not fall; to offset or compare the value of one thing with another], (3)scope [to look at, for the purpose of evaluation, to value, a means for viewing or observing.] and (4)depth [how deep something is, the distance from the top to the bottom of something.] It has taken my entire ordained ministry of 40 years to really understand the meaning of these 4 values, breadth, balance, scope and depth.

I hope that on the other side of this, we will be more loving people, people loving like Jesus. I hope that we will be seeking the happiness of others and I believe this will be our greatest happiness. I hope that at the end of all this, we will understand each other better, and that we will understand our own suffering better and the suffering that Jesus went through in Jesus’s death to get to the resurrection. Happy Resurrection, everyone!

In the name of God, creating presence, redeeming Christ, and life giving an inspiring Spirit. AMEN.