

Sermon

All Saints' Episcopal Church

The Rev. Martha Sterne
16 April, 2017, Easter Day Sunday



Grace to you and peace in the name of the Risen One.

So on Maundy Thursday, I came in here in the late afternoon to just hang out a minute after an epic post bridge collapse trek from the wilds of Buckhead, and I looked up to the resurrection window to the left of the altar and there were our All Saints' Resurrection ladies –glowing – bathed in the westward sun. Look close and you'll see one has already registered the angel and she is so shocked she tilts backwards. Or as we say in Mississippi,. Jump Back! Another one is leaning forward going Huh? And the one I identify with is ambling slow way back in the garden, looking as Felicia Guest says like she is going - Doe-de-doe-de-doe. Because she is just so clueless as to what's right around the bend-the greatest good news of all time - that hate and death do not have the bitter last word! Love does! Life does! For Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen In Deed!

Every story of the Resurrection starts with the women - one woman in John, two in Matthew, the version we read today; three women in Mark— that's our window—and Luke loves women and their stories and so in his gospel he has three named and lots more unnamed, so there is kind of a womanly flash mob at the tomb. Only one woman is in every single account –do you know who? Mary Magdalene, who early on along the centuries got discounted as a shady character with no evidence whatsoever - not a smidge! Maybe the guys telling the stories and writing them down were threatened? Ya think? So let's give her real due today. God bless the Magdalene which is the name of her town by the way like saying God bless the Sandy Springian because she shows up for real. At the cross and the tomb— as she had showed up for him all along - on the good days and the bad days and the worst day and now the best! She shows up because she was Jesus' deep and real friend. That's all we know about her and wouldn't we love it if that what people know about us! That we are a real and deep and true friend of Love? I think we saints yearn to be. So Mary Magdalene is the saint for us because look, we've shown up! Every weekers and twice a yearers and first timers and olden goldies, we have shown up! Because I believe we yearn to be Love's real and deep friends. Yes sometimes jumping back. Yes sometimes going HUH? And yes lots of times clueless! But we are here ladies and gentlemen because we yearn to be friends of Love.

And when you yearn to be Love's friend—well, by the grace of Christ just in your yearning, you become, you are Love's friend. And there's nothing bigger, nothing better than to become and more Love's deep and true and eternal friend and to know this and to trust this gracious knowing about the human race: You and I and all them - we are created to be Love's eternal friend. I learned that first here with you. And I know it through this year with you more deeply than ever.

Now there are a couple of things about the Matthew version that make it pure D All Saints. First of all it is Drama Drama Drama! Nobody else - not Mark not Luke not John - has the tomb still closed and the angel making a big splashy entrance after the women get there, showing up like angel lightening! And nobody else has the soldiers falling down in a coma from fright. Nobody else has the soldiers at all! Nobody else has the earthquake! Boom! And nobody else has the angel opening the tomb before the women's eyes! Saints, this is our kind of resurrection discovery!

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All the gospels say the women were terrified, but only this one says they had fear and great joy. That's us, too!. Yes the fear is here, is in us, but also the joy! I know some big chickens in this congregation and I am one of them - but even we chickens yearn to enjoy the world—so full of the dearest freshness, deep down things. --and on our best days we are a people who ask as Gerard Manley Hopkins also puts it “What is all this juice and all this joy?” We are a people who love the beauty and juice and joy of this world! And we know the world can be cruel and mighty crushing, and when you love a lot of different people all over everywhere like a lot of you do - why your heart is outside your chest all over this fragile earth our island home. So yes we fear, but yes we joy!! For love. By the grace of Jesus Christ.

Now stop and think what happens last on this tomb empty and death turned into life day. The angel had said come and see. And they did. And then the angel says go and tell. Go and tell the guys (chickens) that Jesus will meet them up ahead, which is say Love will meet you around the bend!! And they do go to tell. And this is when the best part happens. For on their way to go and tell - even before they get anywhere, Love meets them along the way! Just in their beginning the journey to go and tell and through their yearning, their true and eternal friend meets them along the way. And I believe that can happen this very day, this very week, this Eastertide, this crazy life to you and to me. So be on your way. Go and tell. Death is not the last word. Life is. Love is. And nothing - not powers, not principalities, not disease, not old age, not family conflict, not bridges falling down, not addiction, not geo-politics, not ennui, not failure, not success, not anxiety, not being broke, not being rich, nothing need separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus who lives.

Eternal boundless friendship with Love - that is the promise of this day. Rejoice. Be on your way. You've got a friend up ahead. Amen