

Sermon for Easter Sunday

The Day of Resurrection

April 21, 2019

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Isaiah 65:17-25. Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 Acts 10:34-43 Luke 24:1-12

In the Name of God,
whose power in us, can do infinitely more
than we can ask for or imagine. Amen

- Ephesians 3:20

*The women found the stone rolled away from the tomb;
but when they entered, they did not find the body . . .
. . . suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.
“Why do you seek the living among the dead?
He is not here, but he has been raised.”*

Up until that moment of revelation, the women who came with spices to properly prepare Jesus' body for burial seemed to be doing what was normal; what was to be expected; what was fitting and proper.

They were faithfully doing what people of their culture had always done to show their respect for the dead.

Jesus had died. Jesus was dead. This was true.

But then . . . a new truth!

“Why do you seek the living among the dead?

He is not here, but he has been raised.”

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In today's world we're constantly faced with so called fake news. Sometimes the truth is intentionally misrepresented or slanted. Other times we're presented with a sincere effort to report facts, but later more information reveals that the original news report was incorrect.

A man is attacked, a victim of a violent hate crime.  
No, wait, that attack was staged as a publicity stunt.

A boy who's been missing for years is discovered in a neighboring state.  
Later, DNA testing proves that the teenager is actually a man pretending to be the lost boy.

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Not all misinterpreted truths, turn out to be disappointments, though. Like the women in the burial garden, we too can discover that seeing our present understanding of the truth in new light, can be like the angels asking, " Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Like this scenario ...

Ben saw numbers surrounding him.
He was enclosed by screens that flashed numbers and displayed graphs at him all day long; when to buy, when to sell, the trends to watch for. He lived for those numbers. But he couldn't see beyond them. "Why do you seek the living among numbers?" Ben felt an angel asking him one day when the screens seemed to be going dark. Ben realized that he had become blind to the lives that those numbers represented. When he began to see and know, the hopes and dreams of those very real people. His job as a number cruncher became a ministry as a life enhancer.



Things in Tanya’s life just hadn’t turned out the way she had hoped.

Her own career stalled early on. She and her husband hadn’t been able to live the *Architectural Digest* lifestyle she always imagined for herself.

Her children, good kids, had disappointed her in so many ways, from their careers to their spouses.

Tanya had become cynical and angry — and alone. So, the angels ask,

“Why do you seek the living in a tomb of disappointment you dug for yourself?”

Tanya’s judgements could have kept her from seeing or hearing the angels in her world.

But, by heeding the heavenly nudge, by giving and receiving forgiveness,

Tanya was able to step out from her empty tomb and step into the light of joy in her family.



“Don’t answer that just yet,” Matthew’s campaign manager advised him.

”Let’s test it and see where your constituency is with this.”

Matthew, the candidate, knew the stand that he believed he should take.

But that’s was not the question. The question was always:

What response will keep me in office? What position will win the next election?

After the last vote is tallied, the angel will ask,

“Why did you seek the living among polls?”

Matthew’s response will determine if he continues his identity as a politician or if he will begin his walk on the road as public servant.



We've heard it before:

Be afraid of them.

They're out to get us and our jobs and our country.

We've got to put a stop to them before it's too late. They're different.

They don't share our values — they don't even speak our language.

Look, I'm not a racist or bigot, but we've gotta protect our own.

Yep, we've heard it all.

But, we also know that we've had opportunities to know some of "them" and we've come to know otherwise.

Those strangers are also our neighbors and they've become our friends.

Those outsiders love their families and our community as much as we do.

There are times when we have heard the question,

"Why do you seek the living in the midst of deadening hate and fear?"

And we have an answer. Our answer is found in our prayer.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow your love.

Where there is darkness, may we shed light.

And where there's doubt ... true faith in you.

The question asked by the angel of the women on Easter morning is being asked of us every morning of our lives.

Why do we seek the living among the dead?

Our answer: Because we're disciples of Jesus, that is what we do.

Because we're Easter people, we see hope where there is despair.

God's love and grace abounds in our lives,

and so, we choose love, instead of cowering in fear.

God's never-ending invitation to freedom, raises us up
from tombs of selfishness and fear and anger and hatred,
and it leads us forth to moments of forgiveness;
it empowers us to fight for justice and peace;
and it encourages us to serve God, by responding to the needs of others.

When we help a refugee family settle in our community,
we are bringing new life to people that others tried to kill.

When we enable a woman to literally wrap herself in our prayers,
we're bringing light into her darkness.

When we provide a nutritious meal to a hungry man living on the streets,
we're providing a moment of peace in his daily state of anxiety.

Every act of compassion, no matter how simple or how small,
proclaims the good news that Christ is risen indeed.

Let us pray.

Holy and Risen Lord Jesus,

On this Easter Sunday, we pray that you enliven our hearts and open our eyes,
so we can seek and discover ways to bring your resurrection
to the darkness and shadows around us.

Give us the fortitude to bury our own self-interests and desires
so we can work for the sake of the greater good.

Allow us to die to self, in order that we can be restored us to new life in you,
the Risen Christ, the wellspring of compassion and mercy,
that empowers us to serve in your name, and that God's will be done,
now and forever. Amen.

Sources:

The New Interpreters Study Bible, NRSV with Apocrypha, Abington Press, Nashville, 2003

Connections, April 2019, MediaWorks, Londonderry, N.H.