

# **“The Quest For Rest”**

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

Easter Sunday

April 20, 2014

The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of John, chapter 20, verses 1 through 18. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I

do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. Let’s pray. Holy God, who sent your Son Jesus the Christ to die so that we might live, open our hearts and minds this morning. Fill them with the truth so it cannot be denied any longer. Turn up the volume in our ears, and have us listen intently. Position our hearts to embrace your way of thinking. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Did you see how all the kid’s eyes lit up when they saw the Easter baskets? Kids find Easter baskets filled with jelly beans and chocolate eggs a lot more interesting than the resurrection of Jesus. And believe it or not, the sweet treats I just mentioned have been part of history when it comes to Lent and Easter. For example, centuries ago, Easter treats were hot cross buns made by monks, and then during Lent, they were given to the poor. Eggs became popular at Easter between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

During Lent people didn’t eat eggs, so they were preserved and stored. Then after Lent was over all the eggs were eaten. Germany began making chocolate eggs for Easter in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it’s symbolic of rebirth. So if you’re wondering why

I've chosen to give out Easter baskets to the kids for Children's Time—now you know the story behind it.

Of course there's more to Easter than jelly beans, colored eggs, and chocolate. Our aim is to teach our children the deeper reason for celebrating the Easter. We know they're growing up fast, and we want them to be prepared for the myriad of things that'll happen to and around them. We want them to know there's someone who can help them through those challenging times in their lives. We want to teach them who to go to when times get really tough. We want to be real with them, and as they grow, move them gently into the reality of the world.

We want to move them gently into the reality of the world. So when a death happens they'll be able to grasp just a little where mom is even though physically she's gone. We want them to not be afraid when they hear about school shootings. Or when a loved one comes home from Afghanistan in a box with a flag wrapped around it. We want our children to know they can come to us and to God when tragedy strikes. Mom and dads and brothers and sisters don't always have the answers for little ones. Sometimes we're so caught up in our own grief we find it hard to comfort someone else. And sometimes we're so logical and rational and have lived a lot longer than kids have, so we know the reasons why things happen, and we're able to muddle through. **NOT. A GREAT BIG NOT.**

We don't understand why our mom died way too soon. We don't understand why our brother died in Afghanistan. We can't imagine why God allowed our daughter to pass away. We keep searching for peace. It's a quest for rest. We want to find some peace. So often we find things just don't make any sense. We want to find a reason that justifies the end. We want answers.

I think that's what was going through Mary Magdalene's head. She rushed out the door in the middle of the night to get to Jesus. She was dumbfounded that

such a powerful teacher and miracle worker would be put to death. It didn't make any sense to her. She ran to the tomb. She was driven—she wasn't afraid of the dark, she wasn't afraid of the graveyard, and she wasn't afraid of the guards. She was desperate and on a quest to find some peace about what happened.

She hurried along full of anticipation. When she got to the grave she was totally surprised. It wasn't at all like she expected. It didn't make any sense. Why is the stone rolled away? Did somebody take Jesus, and if they did, why did they take him and where is he? She wants answers. To her amazement, the guards were nowhere to be found. Not really knowing what to do, she runs back and told the others what she'd seen. She finds Peter and John. Then they started running toward the graveyard. They all started running.

Peter and John, they didn't know whether to believe Mary or not. What was going on around here? Nothing was making any sense. No doubt all three of them were grieving deeply from what happened at the cross. When a person dies all hope for the relationship is gone. The person—they're gone. Everything goes from a hope for relationship to a deep feeling of despair . . . . . but . . . . . that's only when you're thinking logically and rationally.

So running as fast as Peter and John could, with John outrunning Peter, he gets to the tomb and bends down to look in. John thinks—this makes no sense at all. The only things in there are the grave clothes! Peter arrives, brushes past John and walks in. Peter just stands and stares. Both of them are thinking the same thing; this just doesn't make any sense. By that time Mary arrived and Peter and John had already booked it on home. Why hang around? He's gone right?

Mary bent down to look in the tomb. She started to weep really loud. She didn't remember what Jesus said—that he would rise from the dead. It just makes no sense she thought. Why would the authorities have bothered to take off Jesus'

grave clothes? Why not just take everything? It's as if Jesus became a ghost and his physical body lifted up and left the clothes where they lay. It just makes no sense. Dead bodies don't simply disappear! Maybe Jesus faked his death? Maybe somehow he escaped and then appeared alive to many. Maybe somebody stole the body? Or maybe, Mary thought, maybe I loved Jesus so much my mind is just hallucinating, and I'm making all this up.

But then Mary's eyes saw something. She saw two angels standing by Jesus' grave clothes. The angels asked her, "Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Mary said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Then Mary turns and sees someone she thought to be a gardener. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. He called out to her and said "Mary!" . . . . . That's when it all made sense. She got it! It made sense! Hearing Jesus speak her name somehow brought a sudden transformation of the grief she felt. Her quest for rest was complete. It finally made sense.

When Mary hears Jesus speak her name her living relationship is restored with him. All the rules of logic and reason don't matter anymore. Jesus had risen from the dead. Her logic went out the window! She realizes Jesus is alive! It finally made sense! Well . . . . . it kind of made sense . . . . . *we think*. After all, Mary had Jesus standing right in front of her. She heard his voice say her name.

Laying all our logic, reason, and quest for rest aside this morning. Why are we here? Just like Mary before she believed Jesus had risen, we don't get it either, but we want to know more. We can't let go of our quest for rest. We want to have that peace about the afterlife. We want to know why things happen in the world that are so disturbing. We want to understand. We want more than jelly beans and chocolate eggs. And *we want to give our children more*.

You think to yourself, “I’ve already dealt with so much loss and sorrow in life. How can there possibly be any more?” So you’re here today looking to make sense of it all . . . . like Mary. Maybe coming here today you thought you’d find some left-over jelly beans and chocolate eggs. Well the good news is that there are some more Easter baskets left over, but don’t you want something more? Don’t you want to end this quest you’ve been on? Aren’t you really looking for something better for yourself and for your children?

Okay, I get what you’re thinking. You don’t see any proof for the resurrection right? Right, well, I do, and that’s part of *your evidence*. I am proof that Jesus resurrected from the dead. I was on a quest for rest years ago. I found what I was looking for. And talk to others here today. They too have experienced that same rest. Until Jesus finds you, and you grab ahold of him as Mary did, your quest for rest will *never end*. You’ll search your whole life, and never feel peace until you grab ahold of the one that will help you make sense of it all. If you’re willing and ready, your quest can end here this morning for rest. Let Jesus call you by name. Be bold. Receive eternal life this morning and come and pray with me. Amen.