

In the Name of the Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Alleluia! What else could, or should we start with? There is nothing else, really. So, after that start, where do we go with today's message? Well, when in doubt, preach the Gospel...right?!

We look at the discovery of the Resurrection of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Mark...and invite its relevance and its brilliant reality into OUR lives, you and me, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First verse:

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.”

The ever-present, supportive and always sustaining women. They joined with Jesus, followed him, every bit the disciples as the men. And, in a man's world 2,000 years ago, far more so than even now, can we acknowledge, let alone assess, the incredible boldness and significance of the presence and witness of these women?

Here they are. Through thick and thin. Hearing the hosannas...and so soon thereafter, right there for the trial, torture, and execution. The men disciples disappeared. But the women...who love Jesus like no other...stayed with him, even at the cross to the end. And, when it was over, with their hearts and lives crushed, crushed and broken, one might think they would be so distraught as to be inconsolable and stricken into agonizing despair. But they suck it up. Pull themselves up, gather together to mourn, and dutifully set out to the last place on earth they want to go. They need to do something to avoid becoming lost in their grief, so they go to the tomb. And, when they get there?

‘They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

Alright, fill in the blanks with your own life experiences, enriching your imagination of this event. Here are at least three women, in their bottomless grief, also worrying and wondering...what or how or who is going to help us? We have to do this, anoint the body of Jesus...but how do we get in there? Still, they go on, press on in faith, even as they do not have an answer. They know they are powerless to physically enter on their own. There is no solution in sight.

You know the rest. They get there, and behold!

"Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him."

The short version? It is all taken care of. Do not worry.

No anointment is necessary...not because someone has already done it, but because the body is not here at all. He has been raised. And, just for verification, here is where they laid him.

That is today's story. That can be OUR primary story. THE story for us all. Yet, the great mystery, and the great challenge, is to connect the dots...if we can, or rather, if we even really want to.

What is the Easter message for all of mankind? The Resurrection of Jesus, and its affect upon us? May God help us with eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel the truth. May God answer this prayer.

What really is it? The answer? The same thing these three women heard:

It is all taken care of. Do not worry.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the beginning revelation of the power of God...the power to transform human lives and souls back to the intention of the Creator at Creation. Being in love. Being in partnership. Being whole, as in holy. The Way of Love.

Are these just words? Generalizations? Sappy sentiments in a hard world?

No. In this light, you and I and the rest of mankind have the path opened to our relief. Relief. It is all taken care of. Do not worry.

Think of the image of Atlas, the man, holding the world on his shoulders. That is the burden that we carry, as sensate, rational, intelligent human creatures...the burden that we impose upon ourselves, the burden that is imposed upon us. All around us, everywhere, and across all recorded time, we have and are constantly witnessing the great struggle. All of mankind, everywhere and always, is in tension and conflict and challenge to do right as each sees fit. Correct the wrongs. End the sufferings. Ease the pain. But it never ends. Never...because you and I and every living person has difficulty in not being in control. We are not naturally comfortable with hearing that "It is all taken care of. Do not worry."

I confess that I long misunderstood and wanted to do the best I could, just like everyone else, but had this aching that something was missing...it wasn't completely right. Finally, I came to know, by what we call the Grace of God, notwithstanding my desire to do and be right, I could not shoulder that burden. That I was no more qualified than anyone else to have a judgment or opinion to impose on anyone else.

So, I was able to give up that burden, but only with God's help in answer to my prayers. By this very Resurrection, I was able to lay it aside...change the focus of my life from being in constant critical analysis

into a start to see people for who they really are...children of the living God: imperfect like me, wanting safety and loving like me, alternately grinding through life and finding bits and pieces of joy and happiness, like me. The mystery of it all is that I, myself, did not do this...but rather God who, above all else, is the healer and lover of all and everything.

God loves us in the way that gives us peace...allows us to really be ourselves in the image of God....and today is the proof of it. Easter shows how God aches...ACHES...to be with us. Longs to be in love with us....even me, as little and meaningless as I am. The way into that romance...that expansive opening of limitless expression within the heart...that all opens up today.

It is the Resurrection of Jesus, from the man who was crucified...risen from the dead into the Christ, the Anointed One of God. It is the Resurrection of Jesus that makes possible the closing of the loop of the great mystery within the cosmic journey of God's creation.

It is through the Resurrection of Jesus that God can take each of us by the hand, so to speak, from the potential of our humanity when we are born from our mother's womb, on a journey into the reality of transformation into the divinity that lies dormant within each of our souls.

If you hear and remember only one thing from this message today, let it be this one: Resurrection for us is NOT just about waiting until we are dead to see what happens next, if anything. Resurrection for us is the opportunity, through God, to live...to fully live...today. In peace. In security. In love. As we were really born to do.

It is all taken care of. Do not worry.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. By his great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope, through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....brought to you and all the world in the loving Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.