

Sermon April 1, 2018 April Fools...for the Love of God! Cara B. Hochhalter

Acts 10:34-40 and Mark 16:1-8

OK, so God is playing an April Fool's joke on us this year....I imagine God saying, "So you thought Jesus was dead? April Fools! Christ Lives Again!

And so, we become, "April Fools---for the Love of God!"

Let us be in prayer: God, whose love bridges life and death, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts together, be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Our Sunday School's title for today theme is: Love Comes to Life! God's comment on the death of Jesus...is that Love Lives On!

The Spirit of Christ/the Love of God....It is all of one piece in my mind. It is a force for good that wells up inside of us. It wells up inside of all life. It is beauty and holiness and truth, and it is life-giving.

When we hear about an injustice...when we see blatant prejudice, or we hear that the last living rhino has died...or we think about the destruction to this precious earth; when we hear of anyone being abused or harassed or harmed by senseless violence... don't we all ache inside...and if we stop a minute to listen, we might hear this Love of God/ this Spirit of Christ inside us...urging us to speak, to act, to do the loving, compassionate thing...whatever that is for each one of us.

Arundhati Roy writes: "Not only is another world possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing." Can you hear this Spirit of Christ, breathing in you? Longing for a different world to unfold. Love... trying so hard to live on... to move within us in our own circles...here...in this town, in these communities, in our own relationships with one another! You may name it with other words...but can you feel a deeper love, compelling you to reach out from the boxes in which we put ourselves... extending compassion towards others? Can you feel the aliveness of the Love of God moving within you?

I want to share an Easter poem by a contemporary artist/theologian, Jan Richardson. It is called **Seen: A Blessing for Easter Day**

You had not imagined
that something so empty
could fill you
to overflowing,

and now you carry
the knowledge
like an awful treasure
or like a child
that roots itself
beneath your heart:

how the emptiness
will bear forth
a new world
that you cannot fathom
but on whose edge
you stand.

So why do you linger?
You have seen,
and so you are
already blessed.
You have been seen,
and so you are
the blessing.

There is no other word
you need.
There is simply
to go
and tell.
There is simply
to begin.

"Seen" appears in Jan Richardson's book, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*.

Mary Magdalene, bless her heart, is recorded as being there in all four Gospel accounts of the Easter story. There is no doubt that she loved Jesus, she followed his teachings and she was a disciple, herself. Apparently, it was the women who tended to the deceased....and so these three women, you can see them kneeling in my image on the cover...they come bringing spices to perfume the body of Jesus.

Besides Mary Magdalene, there was Mary, the mother of James. Who was she? Some speculate that this "other Mary" was the wife of Clopas (remember him on the Road to Emmaus?) she was also the mother of James, one of the disciples. It makes

sense, doesn't it that if your son was a disciple of Christ, you also might be involved in this inclusive and engaging ministry that Jesus taught? So it was Mary Magdalene, another Mary, and *Salome*, the wife of Zebedee, also a mother to some of the disciples, who all came to find the body of Jesus on that Easter morning.

So, let's get inside this moment...the women have witnessed the crucifixion of their beloved Jesus, they come expecting to anoint his body with spices... the huge boulder has miraculously been rolled away and now some kind of angel tells them that Jesus lives, still...that they will see him on the road to Galilee. How would you feel?...Would you be afraid, shocked, wanting to run away from it all...dumbfounded? Would you believe it or think it was some kind of scam?

The women are told to tell Peter and the other disciples and yet, in this version of the story...the two Marys and Salome are so afraid, or awestruck, they run away and do not tell anyone! Some say this Mark version ends too abruptly. No Jesus talking to Mary in the garden, no racing of other disciples to come and see for themselves. In fact, there are a couple of added endings even in your Bible!

But I like this ending. It puts me there to imagine what happens next. This ending feels like a "whispered story"...never mind all the triumphant music and flashy lilies...this is a story of women who came, saw something and heard something that was more than they could handle...and they ran away.

Perhaps the truth about the Spirit of Christ/the Love of God...IS more than we can handle....but we are asked to try....whether in whispered conversations or exuberant praises...we are asked to look for this living Christ.

In a site called, *Pulpit Fiction*, the writer says, "You want to experience the resurrected Christ? Live as he lived, love as he loved, forgive as he forgave, and believe as he believed and you will experience the Living Christ...*because you and I are the ending of the story.*

You and I are the ending of the story...even as foolish as we may feel or look to others, can we truly become April fools...for the Love of God?

Amen...

