

Luke 24:1-12

Experiencing the Resurrection

Let's start with what we know. Jesus was crucified. The women, the apostles, and other others saw it. Joseph of Arimathea, asked for the Jesus' body and had him buried in a tomb. Jesus is dead and there is no getting around that. After the Sabbath, women have headed to the tomb with their prepared spices and ointments that will be part of the burial ritual. They are approaching the tomb with gut wrenching grief over the loss of this one man who they had loved, hoped in, saw their future in. But that has all ended with Pilate's verdict that Jesus would be put to death, and that as death on a cross.

The trauma of the past days would have been overwhelming, for the women and for the eleven disciples that were left. Poor Peter, his feelings of betrayal sitting as another layer of grief over the death of Jesus. And that is trauma. Layers of grief, guilt and anger. If you have experienced the death of a loved one you will know that. There are always questions. For me at the death of my mom the guilt stemmed from the fact that my last call with her dropped when my phone went dead and instead of calling her back after I plugged in my phone I went on with things, thinking I would get to it another day. That other day never came, my mom died before I got back to her.

For another, it might be the questions of, "Did we make the right decisions about end-of-life care?" Maybe the trauma is not around death but around the ending of a career, a marriage or difficult relationship with a loved one. Not one of us is spared the trauma of death and dying, it just might be more an ending rather than a death. They come with similar challenges at times.

Then as we watch the news and hear of another opioid overdose, another mass shooting, more bombs dropping on the Ukraine, and coming out of two years of massive shifts in our lived experience due to the pandemic...all of us is experiencing some amount of trauma.

We can relate to the women as they come up to the tomb and find the stone rolled away. Not only that, going inside they did not find the body of Jesus. They are already overwhelmed with grief, guilt, and anger, and now they are perplexed and terrified because Jesus is gone!

How can one comprehend all of this? It is too much to bear. And note that in this telling of the resurrection story all there is to know is that Jesus is gone. He does not come and speak with them or reassure them. Two others men that are dazzling white do, but not Jesus. This is more of a discovery of a missing body than a moment of resurrection. It is the two men who say to the women, "Remember how Jesus told you, while he was

still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” (v6).

It was in their remembering, of being reminded, and then given the task of informing the others, that the women are able to get up and do something. They head back to the apostles, but remember they too are experiencing the trauma of the last days and to hear the women tell their story, well, it must of sounded not just like an idle tale but a tall tale. Think of all the talk of fake news of the last years. This must have been heard as fake news to the max.

And no one is trying to convince anyone of anything, all they keep doing is going back to what they know. What they heard Jesus say.

Last week I spoke about needing to experience the cross. Now we need to experience the resurrection. There is no explaining it. This is not something that can be done with science. God is the creator of science but can work both inside and outside our realm of understanding.

The resurrection is a moment of promise, of hope, and of reality in the midst of trauma. Resurrection, new life, is what can come out of even the most horrible and difficult of circumstances when God is given the power in our lives to take all that we know and experience, both the good and the trauma, and from the death, the grief, the endings, the hurt, and struggle, bring about new life in ways that we cannot even conceive while we are in the midst of the challenges.

How can we know that Jesus is risen, that there is the promise of new life? We can know as the women and the apostles did, going back to the words of Jesus. We too have the whole of scripture that witnesses to the work of God in the lives of people and creation. We have our own lived experiences that we can reflect on and we can share this with each other. Just as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them went and shared what they knew with the others, we too can share what we know. We don't have to fully understand it or explain it, but we can attest and witness to the life changing, life giving experience of God's resurrection power, even if we don't use those words. We share our story, we share God's story, we share hope, promise, and experience. This takes trauma and makes it triumph. Our grief though present is given hope for new life.

Live into the hope, the promise, the experience of the resurrection.

Be at peace, love and serve the Lord your God knowing that life overcomes death and God is present in the pain and in the celebration, in the dying and in the living. God goes with you and is with you – always. Amen.