

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, MT
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Easter Sunday

April 17, 2022

Pastor Matthias Krier

Scripture Lesson: John 20:1-18 (NRSV)

20Early 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. ²So 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.' ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look* into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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.' ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.’¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew,* ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher).¹⁷ 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.”’¹⁸ 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.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

“Seeing is Believing”

Matthias Krier

How many times have you said the phrase or have heard the phrase, “*Seeing is Believing?*” Mabel, a dedicated church goer, said again and again that she would get her husband to church one way or another. Her sister who knew her husband quite well said, “Well Mabel, seeing is believing.” Well guess how Mabel got the job done?



Seeing is believing, is it not?

How many of you are like a *Doubting Thomas* who must see to believe? While growing up many of us were taught to believe in the resurrection as a matter of faith. Nothing wrong with that except that we can sort of believe in something like the Lord's Prayer but does it change the way in which we live and move and have our being? When we truly believe in something like the Lord's Prayer – it will change us. I confess that I said the Lord's Prayer for decades as a rote

prayer, but that was it, it did not change me in any way. It wasn't until my late 20's when I experienced the Lord's Prayer at Camp Hope for those with disabilities where we did interpretive movement to the Lord's Prayer. Something changed within me when I moved to the words of the Lord's Prayer in song.

The same could be said of the Resurrection. Folks can believe in it as a matter of faith, but does it change you—has it changed you? Has it transformed you in the likeness of Christ? Is this not the bottom line of our belief in the Resurrection to experiencing new life, abundant life and eventually, eternal life! This past week in Mid-Week Reflections a gentleman shared that for him, the Resurrection, could be summarized with one word: HOPE!

We live in troubled times around our nation and around our world. And while many of us may believe in the Resurrection and of New Life in Christ, where does it lead us as a follower of Jesus Christ? The followers of Jesus were anointed as apostles to transform the world. Our global mission statement as United Methodist is this: *“To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.”*

It is one thing to come to the realization of the resurrection as Mary Magdalene and the disciples experienced on that first Easter morning, but then what? The disciples were students of Jesus for around 3 years and now are being *anointed* and *appointed* as apostles to make disciples of Christ.

How is it that we can move from discipleship to apostleship? Before we answer this question, what exactly is an apostle?

An apostle, in its literal sense, is an emissary, from Ancient Greek ἀπόστολος, literally "one who is sent off", from the verb ἀποστέλλειν, "to send off".

Yeshua, Jesus' name in Aramaic, anointed and appointed men and women as ambassadors, as emissaries, as apostles to bring about the transformation of the world.

Keep in mind the disciples fled when Jesus was arrested and taken into custody. Peter, the supposed Rock, was not yet the Rock and denied Yeshua repeatedly. But later, these timid disciples along with Peter gave their lives for this mission to

make disciples for the transformation of the world. What happened to turn these timid disciples into a band of courageous apostles on a mission for God?

After they experienced the empty tomb, they experienced the Risen Christ. After experiencing the risen Christ they were *anointed* and *appointed* to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. But there is more.

While they were students of Jesus, they learned about means of grace that would empower them to be not only disciples of Christ, but apostles for Christ. Our Lenten Study book for this season was entitled, "*Five Means of Grace.*" The Five Means of Grace are ways to not only deepen our relationship to God as our Rock through Christ, but experiencing what the psalmist proclaimed in God being our Rock. *The Five Means of Grace* by Elaine A. Heath are as follows: *Prayer; Searching the Scriptures, The Lord's Supper, Fasting and Christian Conferencing.*

Not only can God be our Rock of Refuge and Strength through these five means of grace, we can become a means of grace for one another. When they did not know how to pray, Jesus taught them how to pray, not only in words, but in meditation. Again and again, Jesus went away to the hills to pray in silence, in solitude. I am sure Yeshua was remembering the words from the Psalms, "*Be still and know that I am God.*" When they needed to be fed, Jesus broke bread with them, not only in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense as well. He empowered them with his teachings and his parables which transformed them into the likeness of Christ himself. We, like the disciples, need to search the scriptures and not only listen, but reflect on who are we called to be. Once we discern who we are called to be, then we discern what are we called to do? This by the way is not done in a vacuum, it is done through Christian Conferencing or what may be called spiritual companionship. There are a number of groups here in the church that provide this Christian Conferencing or where you have an opportunity for spiritual companionship: Adult Sunday School, Mid-Week Reflections, Women's 4th Day, Friday Morning Men's Breakfast, Men's 4th Day, Youth Group, Youth Sunday School, Confirmation & Beyond, LGBTQIA+ or Alphabet Mafia.

Mary Magdalene recognized Jesus after he called her by name: "Mary."

If you are listening, Yeshua is calling you by name, so LISTEN! LISTEN with every fiber of your being!

Once the Resurrection becomes a reality, it is a lifelong journey of striving to be a follower of Yeshua. Becoming a committed follower of Jesus, is to commit ourselves to spiritual practices that will not only deepen our experience of the living God, but it will empower us to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world!

I believe if we truly desire to grow as disciples of Christ, we need to practice spiritual disciplines. One that does not get much attention is fasting. And fasting does not mean eating fast food. Instead fasting can heighten our spiritual sensitivities while not letting certain foods or beverages control us. Deep down we all know what our addictions are and what we think we cannot go without. Lent helps me to fast from things that are obstacles in my relationship to God. Fasting doesn't just mean food and beverages of all kinds, it means fasting from too much of anything whether that be television, video games, swearing, using God's name in vain, telling lies and even white lies, anger, unkindness, and an essential practice that can save lives—distracted driving:



While texting should not be taking place while driving, it is not just about texting. It is about being distracted with whatever while you are behind the wheel. Driving while distracted makes the vehicle you are driving a potential weapon of destruction.

Distracted driving causes about 3,000 deaths per year: 3,142 deaths in 2019, 2,628 deaths in 2018 and 3,003 deaths in 2017, according to the NHTSA. Additionally, distracted driving causes about **280,000 injuries per year:** 276,000 injuries in 2018, 285,000 injuries in 2017 and 295,000 injuries in 2016. Mar 7, 2022

These are sobering statistics, are they not? Another cartoon on this I saw was "*Drive now, text later.*" On one occasion when I was 19 years of age I was driving

distracted. I could have been killed on my motorcycle. I was looking at the beauty of the sunset rounding a curve in Red Wing, Minnesota and crashed into the back of a pickup truck at 60 miles an hour. I could very easily have been killed.

Some of us know from personal experience the consequences of driving distracted. Fasting from driving distracted is not just a lenten spiritual practice. It is a year round spiritual practice. And if you are riding with someone who is driving distracted, ask to get out of the car or offer to drive for them.

People's lives are changed in an instant when someone is not focused on what he or she or they are doing. Imagine how we might have avoided all kinds of accidents or blunders or injuries if we were focused on the task at hand. Being a disciple of Christ means a whole host of things, one is simply doing the right thing at any given moment. When in doubt, in any given situation, ask yourself, "What is the right thing to do—just now—in this moment?" Then have the courage to do it!

Two thousand years ago, Mary Magdalene proclaimed, "*I have seen the Lord*" – and proceeded as our first evangelist to tell of the good news that Christ has risen from the dead to the other disciples. This proclamation has brought to us a promise of new life, of new beginnings, of an abundant life, of a meaningful and purposeful life that no doubt changes the way in which we live and move and have our being.

The hymn we are about to sing in preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Communion is entitled "Hymn of Promise". Hear verse one before we sing:

*In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed an apple tree
In cocoons, a hidden promise, butterflies will soon be free
In the cold and snow of winter, there's a spring that waits to be
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see*

May we experience anew the Resurrection and move to a deeper and deeper relationship to God as we strive to be followers of Jesus Christ! Amen.