

## The Great Core Stories of the Bible – Jesus’s Resurrection

Ladner United Church – Sunday April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
Easter Sunday

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### Scripture Readings:

Though we think of Easter as one single story, the Gospels present four different versions. This does not mean that one is right and the others wrong. It simply means each writer, and the community they wrote for or to, told the story from different points of view.

Resurrection narratives in the New Testament are not limited to Easter morning or even after Easter day. John and Luke both speak of post-resurrection encounters between Jesus and the disciples. Years later Paul claimed he saw the Risen Lord. Since then Christians by the Spirit believe because they experience still God’s grace and love through him.

Scholar Tom Long says:

“For all Christians in every generation, everything hangs on the truth of the resurrection. Without it, Jesus was a very good man and an interesting teacher, and Christianity is a coping device for getting along in the world as it is.

With it, the world of sin and death has been invaded by the life-giving power of God, and all Christians are grounded in hope and empowered to resist the powers that hold us in their grip of death.

This is the fact upon which Christian faith rises or falls – “Christ has been raised from the dead...so that Christ may be in all.” (Pause)

We read from the Gospel of John’s account of Easter morning: (pause)

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

<sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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.” <sup>14</sup>When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was

Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who 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." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup>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.'" <sup>18</sup>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.

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Gracious God may the meditations of my heart and the words of my lips if they be your words be worthy and acceptable unto you... and may your word come to your people either through me or despite me.

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We have a choice to make on Easter Sunday...and the choice is around the question - Did God raise Jesus from the tomb?"

Yes or no?

On what happened on that Sunday – all of Christian faith hinges...

Without Easter...there is no Christian faith.

If Jesus' story had ended with crucifixion – he most likely would have been forgotten...another Jewish political agitator amongst thousands done in by the Roman Empire...

Some of his words and teachings may have survived and been passed down, eventually referred to...

He might even have been recorded in other histories of the day as a great teacher, prophet, wisdom guru...

Likely his followers – though deeply grieved – would have eventually gone back to their homes and jobs...and life would have gone on much as before...

And they would have continued to wait and hope in vain for the one the Jewish people had always been waiting for – though perhaps on the next time – having been burned this once and risked so much for another defeat – they might have been twice shy the next time...

On Easter – all the core stories of scriptures hinge for Christians...

We don't know how it happened...Easter is not a verifiable scientific experiment that can be created in a controlled lab with computers and technical tools to re-create the exact conditions...

Unlike the bears den on Grouse Mountain – you may have seen that film – where the camera was put in for the winter and we watched them hibernate and then wake up...

No such scientifically verifiable proof exists for the resurrection...there are four Gospel accounts that speak of what happened – in retrospect – looking back – the writers not recording actual history as it happened – but writing down many years later – looking through the lens of their Easter Faith...

Mark is probably the earliest story:

Three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Salome go to the tomb to anoint Jesus with spices on the day after the Sabbath – (Saturday) so this being Sunday morning...

The stone was rolled away from the tomb...

When they enter a young man dressed in white speaks with them – they are terrified

He assures them to not be afraid that Jesus has been raised...and tells them to go tell the disciples that Jesus has gone on to Galilee before them and they will see him there... (There it ends)

Matthew and Luke incorporate the same story – with a few changes:

Matthew's story has more drama – when Mary Magdalene and Mary (Salome is absent) arrive at the tomb – a large earthquake throws the stone away – and an Angel appears to say Jesus is risen – they flee the tomb and Jesus appears upon the path to tell them not to be afraid – and again says they will meet the Risen Jesus along with the disciples in Galilee

Luke says two men meet the women in the tomb – but this time its Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and a group of unnamed women – a small group who go to the tomb – and they flee back to tell the disciples – but Jesus is not seen by them until his post resurrection experience

John says only Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, finds it empty and flees to find Peter, who along with John, the beloved disciple run to the tomb, find it empty and then return to tell the disciples

Mary stays weeping – to be startled by someone she mistakes as the gardener and who is in fact Jesus and they recognize one another and call each other by name

But they all agree on one fact (Marcus Borg)

The tomb was really empty – God had raised Jesus who on Friday was dead as dead could be but on Sunday morning was alive and risen...

And... they all agree that...

Jesus lives – he continued to experience life after death in a radically new way and was a figure no longer of flesh and blood, confined to space and reality...though his disciples recognized him, saw him eat, heard his voice and saw the wound scars on his body....

Since he is not among the dead and now among the living – the disciples would see him and that he would be with them to the “end of the age”.

This Sunday experienced was not only something that happened but had happened in a way that would change all of human history from that point on through to our time and beyond...

Death, sin and evil had lost the battle and God was busy reworking the world and renewing the people that God so loved...

Like all mysteries – be then a novel or a movie – you have to read or watch them to be apart of what happens and fully experience them...

For Christians – this is a mystery – that God invites us by faith/trust God invites us to become apart of...

Personally and politically...

With our heart, mind, body and soul – our whole being...enter into the mystery of the God who we see most clearly in Jesus...

We enter into the mystery of dying to something as Jesus did and being raised to a new life by God...

Become like Jesus...

We do what the first disciple did – go to Galilee and you will see him there...

Galilee...that’s where life is lived...

Deaths in our daily life – failures in life or work, broken relationships, shattering of dreams and hopes, giving up self images, pushing beyond fear and prejudice to love and service and give

Big Death – not the end – life after

Now and in the future – nothing can separate us from God and we can make choices despite being mired in all kinds of deaths to move to healing and servant hood...

Jesus’ Resurrection by God – a window on the future we live in now and we are moving towards...both us as individuals and the world...our bible study program that has been going alongside of our sermons – Adult Crossings – God’s Journey with Us – The Eight Core Stories of the Bible – invites us to approach scripture and Easter with a -

Wonderful phrase – “teachable spirit”...in the post resurrection experiences – each Gospel writer is giving us an example of how to experience the resurrection...

Mark – who most scholars believe ends his gospel with the women fleeing in terror to Galilee wants us to go back to the beginning of his gospel - where Jesus began his public ministry proclaiming (Mark 1:14) about the Kingdom of God and read it all again in the light of the Risen Lord – use the scriptures and read them in this light

Luke – speaks of the journey to Emmaus which reads much like a worship service with preaching and communion – in worship Luke says – we experience the risen Christ – where the word is preached and the sacraments celebrated...

Two men – they walk with a stranger – they talk about what happened with the stranger who joins them – he explains the scriptures and they arrive – have a meal – bread and fish

For Matthew the Risen Lord is experienced in mission – go and make disciples – I will be with you till the end of the days...goes out and care and serve others...

Matthew in chapter 25 of his gospel records these words of Jesus - in as much as you do it for others – you did it unto me...

John – 4 small stories centering on the beloved Disciple, Mary, the disciples locked in the room afraid and Thomas

Disciple Jesus loved John – looks in the tomb – he believes

Mary Magdalene – takes a different path – she has to speak to and be addressed by Jesus personally

Disciples – gathered locked up – peace be with you – see his body and pierced side – like the Lord’s Supper – in the life of the church

Thomas – see and touch – he needs more – and becomes the symbol of all of us...

Who have to believe but do not get to see...

At the end...the only “proof” of the Resurrection of Jesus...

Are changed lives...in what we experience of the Risen Christ now – what is your story of where in your life and experience you sense the risen Christ...

When I was deployed to Afghanistan –as the end of the tour came – it became harder for me – feeling depleted and worn down to attend to crises in the hospital or to go beyond the wire and deal with the fears of death or injury...

I would get a call saying come to the hospital – we need you and because of security issues – the Ops Center could not say over the cell phone what was happening – I would hang up and know that I wanted to go and had to go but at times

my legs would not want to move. At times like that I would often feel a hand upon my shoulder or at my elbow and a voice saying inside – you can do this – whatever is there – we can face – and we can face that together – now I often attribute that to people’s prayers – both the people who I knew were praying for me and those I did not know – I would also attribute that to the presence of the Risen Christ – as I experienced him – in those times of fear – locked up almost within myself like the disciples in the locked room – he would come to me – I would feel his peace and know that whatever I was about to face – I would not face it alone...

In the end – that is really the only proof of the resurrection...do we experience today the presence of the one Jesus who God raised from the death...for the gospel writers the proof is the same – no one really knows how it happened...but they trust it did and they experienced it when he came to them and they became changed men and women...

He came to his disciples...his friends and they became stronger, wiser, kinder, more daring, more willing to risk and give...

In other words – they became like Jesus...he comes to us with the same goal and in the same way.