

EASTER MESSAGE 4.20.2025

Nora Gallagher recently wrote about practicing resurrection. I like this phrase – practicing resurrection. Ms. Gallagher wonders in her a essay, if we tend too much time in the church discussing whether or not we believe in Jesus' resurrection. She thinks we may be missing the point.

She writes, “When I think about the resurrection now, I not only wonder about what happened to Jesus. I ponder, what happened to his disciples. Something happened to them, too. They went into hiding after the crucifixion, but after the resurrection appearances, they walked back out into the world. They became braver and stronger; they visited strangers, they healed the sick. It was not just what they saw when they saw Jesus, or how they saw it, but what was set free in them...what if the resurrection is not about the appearances of Jesus alone, but also about what those appearances point to, what they ask? It is finally what we do with them that matters; make them into superstitions or use them as stepping stones to new life. Maybe resurrection, like everything else, needs to be practiced.”

Maybe like everything else, resurrection needs to be practiced. It is a splendid phrase. Splendid truth. Our Easter truth.

In so many ways, it does seem that we humans today are longing for a practice of resurrection in our lives. A widow whose husband died – a man struggling to find a new career – a colleague, friend or sibling who falls into a deep depression – in so many ways, so many people are longing for new life, for the practice of resurrection.

On that first Easter Day, we might say the women who arrived at the empty tomb really needed to practice resurrection. Reflect for a moment – the women had gone to the tomb to attend to Jesus' body – this was the last loving service they could do for their Lord. They had witnessed his death. They knew there was no time for a proper burial. So they came with herbs and spices to complete the rites. Their beloved was dead. The least they could do was perform this last act of love for him.

But you know, their hearts must have been heavy. Their life with Jesus was over. The one whose call had been irresistible, the one whose service was like no other they had ever known, now lay lifeless in a tomb.

There must have been fear mixed among their sorrow. Not just the fear of death – but the fear that all their hopes and dreams had also died – died along with Jesus and their dreams also lay lifeless in the grave.

This is what happens to love in the world – the people had known perfect love in Jesus, but the world killed him. The world can be cruel and fearsome.

We know something amazing happened when the women reached the tomb - they were there with their deepest and darkest fears – they entered the place of death – yet, when they entered this place of darkness, what did they find? Nothing, Nada, no body, absolutely nothing.

We are told they were perplexed when they couldn't find Jesus' body – understandable – they thought the story with Jesus was over and

his dead body was it – all was final. Then the angel arrived and reminded them this wasn't the end of the story –

The angel asked, 'why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen. Remember how he told you, while back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners... and on the third day rise again.'

The people needed to be reminded of resurrection – 'remember how he told you' - they needed to practice resurrection – they needed to go and tell all to the other disciples. They received the good news that Christ is risen – now they needed to change from people who perform rites for the dead – to apostles who bear witness to the Living Lord.

They needed to practice resurrection- they needed to change from people who were fearful and frightened to people who boldly would proclaim that God's life is stronger than any death, that God's love is stronger than any hate, that God's peace is more powerful than human violence.

So they practiced on themselves – they told all they had seen and heard to all – it must be said, they were a bit slow on the uptake – the words of the women didn't seem real to them – an idle tale. But they needed to practice resurrection too. Eventually, they got it – together with those first women, they became a courageous group who changed the world.

The good news of Easter, this day of resurrection, changes everything. Cruelty isn't the last word – sin and evil aren't the ultimate powers of the universe. Death doesn't get the last laugh. Jesus rose from the dead. Forgiveness and love and life are the final realities of our world. The power of God is stronger than the tomb, stronger than evil.

The good news of Easter is not only Jesus has risen, Jesus now lives among us. New life is possible – today. But for that to happen, we need to remember resurrection – and also practice resurrection.

The promise of Easter is that we can practice resurrection. We don't need to go about living like the dead – Jesus has been raised – he is the first of the fruits and so we can be assured of what awaits us.

The truth of Easter is that the promise of new life doesn't await us sometime in the future – we are able to live new lives here and now.

I think like most everything else, resurrection needs to be practiced.

Thanks be to God. Amen.