

April 17, 2022

Easter Sunday Year C

Acts 10: 34-43

Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

John 20: 1-18

John 20:1-18

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. 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." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 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. 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." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 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.'" 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.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On this Easter morning in the year 2022 I find myself looking, for, no thirsting for hope. I know that other times through the decades and centuries have been fearful and dark; pandemics have come before, wars have come before.

But still this time is troubled, and I am parched for a sip of hope. And I am finding hope in an unusual place this morning: I am finding hope in my shoes. Yes, my shoes. But first we need a minute with our gospel.

Mary Magdalene could not imagine hope as she went out while it was still dark, to go to the tomb where they had hastily laid Jesus' body close to sundown on Friday evening.

Mary cannot imagine a flicker of hope, much less resurrection. When she arrives Jesus body is gone, and she can only think as far as: someone took his body. Not even a breath of new life is in her.

Where have they laid him? She can only see his body in her mind's eye, and the best she can do is repeat her plea to the disciples, to the angels, to the gardener!

We do not know where they have laid him.

I do not know where they have laid him

Tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

Laid, rested, left, lifeless. The best Mary can hope for, all the relief she can hope for that first Easter morning, is to find Jesus' lifeless body. Still and always dead. But while Mary Magdalene is looking for a body, the gardener is standing in front of her. *"Supposing him to be the gardener..."*

Why does she think this man is the gardener? Dirt on his hands? Holding a fresh new seedling? A rake close by? His clothes, work clothes, this figure, a man who is ready to work? What did Mary see, before she saw Jesus?

Remember, Mary was hoping, at best, to find a lifeless body; she cannot imagine the drenching hope of Jesus standing in front of her, ready to work, to grow the tender shoots, to heal the battered, to protect those flattened by the harsh winds of this world.

Jesus appearing like a gardener at the tomb, gives me the hope I am parched for in these dry, hot days of war and disease.

Which brings me back to my shoes, my place of hope. When I first joined the church at 24 years old, I wore silk dresses and high heels to church. Hard to believe, I know!

On this Easter Sunday on this achingly beautiful morning in our battered world, I

decided to wear my newest shoes.

Clearly no longer high heels, my shoes helped me join in the work of getting church on the hill ready this morning, allowed me to help the Easter bunny hide a few eggs. These shoes are ready to walk the new nature path here at SMWC and to lead worship here at the Labyrinth.

These shoes are ready to work at the Food Pantry in the Trinity Pavilion, and to lead Saturday night worship there. These shoes are also my dance shoes, ready for some line dancing, a place where some newcomers first found Trinity and Whitechapel.

Mary thought Jesus was the gardener, and only in hearing her name could she see, that Jesus is the gardener, ready to work with us in planting, nurturing feeding.

Now I am not suggesting that everyone needs a pair of these shoes, but I invite us all to put on our best church shoes and be ready to join our Savior and brother Jesus in bringing water and hope and alleluias to our parched world!

Amen.