

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster

Sunday, March 31st, 2024, Easter Day

Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

The good news of Easter, and yet puzzling and confusing. When Peter and the other disciple go into the tomb and see that Jesus is not there, John says *that he saw and believed;⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.*

How can someone believe without some understanding. What did they believe and what did they understand or not? Is a preacher like a lawyer in court, never ask a question you don't already know the answer to?

Or is it the idea that the disciple in seeing that Jesus was no longer in the tomb that this meant there was some kind of good news. That there was hope this was not the end of the story. Maybe the clue is in the words, as yet. The understanding would come later, and the disciple believed that he would later know and understand what had happened. That there was a possibility of good news, after all, it couldn't be worse that finding Jesus' body in the tomb. Therefore, a feeling of hope.

And the sequence of the interaction between Mary and Jesus, whom she first thinks is the gardener. He calls her by name, then says not to hold on to him because he has not yet ascended to the Father.

Make up your mind. The calling by name is a form of intimacy and belonging for her and for us today. But not hold on to him?

Jesus says to Mary right after that, to go tell the others about him. And she goes and tells them that she has seen the Lord.

The calling Mary by name is reminding her of his love for her and is about intimacy and belonging, but it also means trust in each other. Both have other things they need to do. Mary cannot keep Jesus for herself and cannot hold on to Jesus as a form of control. She has to let him go. And she has to tell others that she has seen the risen Lord. This means in a sense, stepping outside our comfort zone, even though it is tempting to stay there and hold on to what we know and what we can control.

Hopefully being called by name gives us the confidence and the foundation to step out of our comfort zone in our care and support of one another. The question for us today is, after Jesus calls us by name what is he asking us to do?

It is interesting that the sermon from last night in Roseneath and here this morning dovetail together with the same message at the end.

Are we called to be like the disciple who believed but as yet did not understand?

The story for us doesn't end with Easter. It is a new chapter just beginning. A quote from Soren Kierkegaard comes to mind: *"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."*

The challenge for us is to live our lives forward from this point on trusting in the message of Easter without knowing how it is going to unfold. The unpredictability of it is both exciting and intimidating. There is a temptation to try and want to both predict and control our future. The reality is that we can try but the reality is that we cannot totally succeed. But the good news of Easter is that we can live our lives in the reality of Easter, and which gives us hope and joy in the presence of God in Christ and others in the community.

The journey continues. Let us celebrate with trust, and hope and joyful expectation today and for the times ahead.

Amen

The Lord bless *you* and watch over *you*,
the Lord make his face shine upon *you*
and be gracious to *you*,
the Lord look kindly on *you*
and give *you* peace;
and the blessing ...