

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH: APRIL 4, 2021  
**EASTER: RESURRECTION!**  
*(Mark 16:1-8)*

Those poor women are described in Mark's Gospel as having been 'Greatly Astonished! 'Trembling', 'Bewildered' 'Afraid!' and who can blame them? Utterly discombobulated!

**What were they to make of this? What are we to make of this?** All they were wanting to do that morning was simply anoint the dead body of someone whom they had deeply loved, and followed, but for whom everything had seemed finished by that ghastly Good Friday tragedy, and that's when they made the shattering discovery, that: ...the stone had been moved! ...and Jesus' body was gone! How should they process that? What could this mean?

***WE NOW KNOW THAT HE HAD RISEN!*** It's often argued that by far the best proof of Christ's Resurrection is the existence of the Christian church. If He had *not* risen from the dead, we would probably never even have heard of him. What else could possibly have changed that deeply morose group of utterly despairing disciples into a force just radiant with joy and aflame with supernatural faith and courage?

Without resurrection the whole story of a miracle-working, subversively love-teaching rabbi from Nazareth who was killed in 33CE for causing sedition within a Roman province would have just faded into oblivion! But that he rose from the dead after 3 days - and that there were so many who came to witness the reality and the life-changing effects of that resurrection – well, that changed everything!

Christ's resurrection is one of the most essential pillars of the whole of our Christian faith. It is as a direct result of this that we know the person of Jesus is no more confined simply to history, just someone who lived once, long ago. He is a living presence today. As a result we know that to own the reality of Jesus Christ it is not enough just to study Him, we must meet him. More than an idea, or a memory, he is a presence.

**The risen Christ is not someone simply to remember or even only to believe in, he is someone to meet.** Which means that the Christian Way of life is not so much our knowing *about* Jesus and his teachings so much as us our coming actually to know *him*. As someone I read somewhere said: ***'The greatest scholar in the world who knows everything about Jesus is less than the humblest follower who has got to meet him – who knows him'***.

But just there's the rub. How do we do that - get actually to know him? How do we get actually to meet him? ...*live in him*? And how do we do so in a way that avoids the creation of some unhelpful duality! You know, as if we are somehow separate from this One that we worship.

Our worshipful encounter with the risen Jesus Christ is quite different from our response to some external personality over there, you know, someone up on a pedestal, on the other side of the security line! *Jesus does not want adoring groupies clambering for an autograph!*

His reality is something infinitely more intimate! Something, someone infinitely closer, infinitely more near. I'm kind of putting words into her mouth, but it seems to me that that's something Cynthia Bourgeault<sup>1</sup> is saying as she writes of how we do get to meet him: **...as we are given to become most real – you know, most real with ourselves, most real with others** (*who may or may not also be becoming real*) and **most real within a creation which we are increasingly being given to see is actually already very real!** *Perhaps that's why we love nature so much, why it is so healing for us to go there...*

The early 11thC Saint, Symeon the New Theologian writes of how that is just about exactly what Jesus Christ does - makes us utterly real, as real we are intended by God to be!

Also, that his ***suffering and death is always somehow integral to that most 'real-making' process.*** In Holy Week we revisited the mystery of the cross which lies somehow at the very heart of releasing our clearest perception of all the universe...

We revisit not only to remember but that we, as Christ followers, may come also eventually to surrender ourselves to this most real-making transformation.

Somewhere very deep down, we instinctively actually know all about that! That's perhaps why we tear up – *or at least I do* - at the aching beauty of Margery Williams' Skin Horse's explanation of becoming real to the Velveteen Rabbit, in her 1922 little story of that title.

*"Real ...is a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.' 'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit. 'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. But 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.' 'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?' 'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."*

That, in a sense, is what the risen Christ is constantly doing, resurrecting his restored and profoundly restorative reality in us as we are given to see ourselves as God sees, and doing that throughout all creation! Jesus Christ is even now loving us into our realization of God's reality, *...answering our prayer to see God's kingdom as having come on earth as in heaven...*

That is Christ's Easter miracle-mystery of transformation – described by Cynthia Bourgeault as *'an innovating change from deep within us, as we experience something beautiful and God-given rising up in our perception – drawing us towards fulfillment and completion'*.

Even as the Word once became flesh in Jesus Christ, so we can see the risen Christ now drawing all flesh towards becoming the Word; opening the eyes of our minds and hearts to see resurrection holiness right here – where it has been all along! **'Go to Galilee** that angel had said, **where you will see him'** That is God's plan: *Everything becoming so beautifully clear & focused within Christ's rising reality...*

St Symeon was both loved and rejected for teaching these things in the early Middle Ages. But he was especially hated by a certain Archbishop Stephen for doing so. Stephen insisted that our faith needed to be much more grounded in theory and philosophy, dogma, if it were to avoid heresy. But Symeon insisted on something else. The way of the risen Jesus Christ is meant to be less dogmatic and far more sensory, more experiential. The truth of resurrection is not so much something for us to argue as what we become aware of as the risen One rises up within me and each one of us... That's how we know he is true...

*Remember how we used to sing: He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me and he talks with me along life's narrow ways. He lives, he lives salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart. This is the risen Easter-Christ, here, now, imminent. St Symeon's song, written almost a 1000 years ago:<sup>ii</sup>, describes how:*

*We awaken to find that we are in Christ's body as Christ awakens our bodies,  
and my poor hand is Christ. He enters my foot, and is infinitely me.*

*I move my hand, and wonderfully my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him  
(for God indivisibly whole, seamless in his Godhood.)*

*I move my foot, and at once He appears in a flash of lightning.  
Do my words seem blasphemous? – Then open your heart to Him*

*And let yourself receive the one who is opening to you so deeply.  
For if we genuinely love him, we wake up inside Christ's body*

*Where all our body, all over, every most hidden part of it,  
is realized as joy in Him, and He makes us utterly real.*

*And everything that is hurt, everything that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,  
maimed, ugly, irreparably damaged, is in Him transformed  
and recognized as whole, as lovely, and radiant in His light.*

*We awaken as the Beloved  
in every last part of our body.*

Cynthia Bourgeault quotes Beatrice Bruteau who says that it's in the 'bringing of these two things together - the mortal and the immortal, the earthly and the heavenly, the finite and the Infinite – which is the central mystery of this mystery religion that we call Christianity. It's about "anointing" all the world to be the real presence of God. This is what is celebrated in the Easter vigil and Eucharistic Feast. What we call "resurrection" is the full manifestation of the Incarnation itself. This is the revelation of what and who we really are...'

Resurrection is everywhere. It's what God does! And where we are given actually to spot it, well, that's just where we are given to meet the risen Christ! But beautiful as that is, it's not where it ends. Because Christ's resurrection involves more than just our realization of his reality, there is also our commissioning.

Because the risen Christ is everywhere, he charges all those of us who are given to glimpse his reality to live our lives in such a way that we tell others that Good News: that they too may experience this beautiful re-awakening of their most real selves – sharing an awareness of the same God with us all – everything belonging...

That, as Christ-followers – is what we are! It's what we believe and it's what we do! And as we embrace that most real truth, so suddenly, there is a wholeness as it all kind of holds together, begins to work...

O May we come to know that wholeness more, live it better – even as we are given to believe for it...

Rev Robin Jacobson

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/resurrection3.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Quoted from Holy Week Liturgies/ Cynthia Bourgeault