



EASTER
APRIL 21, 2019
JOHN 20: 1-18
“GET RESURRECTED”

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- Let's see if we can get resurrected this morning. Okay?
- If that sounds crazy or ridiculous, it only means we don't get it yet.
- So, let's see if we can get it.
- Now most of you missed the Good Friday service. No judgment, just saying. But you missed the most important part of the story.
- That's because we don't get resurrected without getting crucified. We don't get new life unless we have tasted death. We don't get renewal without loss. There is no healing without wounding.
- **Healthy religion is about dying before we die.**
- **Religion that makes a difference is about dying before we die.**
- Now everyone here has his or her own story of crucifixion.
- You may not call it that, but that's what it is.
- Crucifixion is a life experience that nails us. An experience that we could not escape. That we could not avoid. That came close to breaking us....
- In anger, as a kid, I cut a hole in my bedroom window screen with my pocketknife. Later, when my father found the hole and asked me about it, I told him what I had done and why I had done it. Made no difference. I could not avoid the whipping with a belt on the bare behind that then came my way.
- No escape....
- Nailed....
- All of us experience the absurd, the tragic, the unjust.
- All of us are done to, wronged, crushed, mistreated, humiliated, and trashed. It's the way of the world.

- The Good Friday cross, with the innocent Jesus nailed to it, says suffering is universal. The only difference between us is what kind of suffering each of us gets and how much of it we get.
- If you think you've gotten more than your fair share, just consider that right now, in this moment, infants are being abused in every way possible, babies are being born drug-addicted or already damaged because their mothers stayed drunk during pregnancy. Children all over the world are dying in this moment of hunger and disease.
- Kinda puts things in perspective, doesn't it?
- So, I have four words that begin with the letter "T" that refer to our choices when it comes to our suffering. And three of them do not get us resurrected. Not the best of odds, for sure, but who said it was going to be easy?
- The first response to suffering is "Keep on **Truckin'**." This response is favored by men. For example, I had a man in my psychotherapy practice who worked in black ops for a couple decades. And he was trained to never look back. Just keep on moving. Take the next step. And, of course, there came a day when he could no longer do the wet work, so he now had a truckload of very dark experiences coming down on him. Because those who trained him to "Keep on Truckin'" did not teach him how to unload the truck when he was through. To this day, our soldiers face the same dilemma when they return from combat overseas....
- Getting nailed is part of the deal. Suffering is our ticket for being born. And "Keep on Truckin'" just won't work.
- Because the stuff can pile up, right? Disappointments, hurts, betrayals, abandonments, injustices, humiliations, failures. And if we just keep Truckin' our load is gonna get mighty heavy.
- Keep on Truckin' makes for a colorful Grateful Dead sticker, but it doesn't make for grateful living....
- The second response is "**Take** it away, God."
- God as the big eraser in the sky. At our beck and call, to banish the bad. God, the policeman, who we ignore or mock until we are in a jam and then, "Help me!"

- “I’ll change my ways. I’ll come to Church on Easter **and** Christmas if you’ll just take away my pain, my trouble, my problem.”
- What we miss is that **the only way out is through.**
- Even Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane plays the “Take it Away” card: He prays “If you will, take this suffering from me.” Until he comes to see that the only way out is through.
- If we try to leap over, do an end run, or find a way under our suffering, we miss the Easter truth that Jesus faced his suffering **head on** and **moved through it** to Resurrection....
- If we choose to avoid, deny, medicate, or minimize our suffering, the third choice is that we **transmit** our suffering to other people, most often to those closest to us.
- This is why a fair number of children of alcoholics become alcoholics. Why young adults on welfare had parents on welfare. Why children of abusers often abuse.
- My father saw it as progress that his father beat him with tree limbs and he only used a belt on me.
- The wounds, unhealed, get passed right on down.
- If we do not **transform** our pain, we most assuredly will **transmit** it to others, most often those we purport to love.
- If we choose one of more of these ways of dealing with our suffering, by the time we are older adults, we likely will be bitter, cynical, disappointed, and hard to be around....
- I know many of you expected an Easter sermon filled with sunshine, lilies, and beatific smiles, but I figured I would tell you the truth.
- It’s my Easter present....
- Because there is a fourth choice. **Transform** it. Die before we die and get resurrected.

- According to scripture, nature is the first bible....
- We had a hard winter, didn't we? Gray skies, brown landscapes, no birds singing, chilled to the bone since about November. Like the cold finger of death inching up our backs.
- But, look what is happening all around us. Trees budding, grass greening up, sunshine—even for Pittsburgh! Dogs wanting to go outside. Birds flying overhead. Perennials poking up through the soil. Penguins in the playoffs....
- What appeared dead is now alive. Loss and renewal.
- **God comes to us as our life.**
- If you suffered a hurtful childhood that scarred you, this is a sacred wound. And if you have realized in any way, that the problem was not you, but the inability of your parents to love you, then you are getting Resurrected.
- If you have been addicted to drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, pornography and are beginning to experience even a bit of freedom and recovery, you are dying and are getting Resurrected.
- Remember, Resurrection is a process. Jesus spent time underground in the tomb. Three days in the tomb symbolizes a heck of a long time. **Because Resurrection takes time. And it is hard work.**
- If you have experienced the death of a loved one and have grieved your way to being re-invested in life, then you, too, have died and are getting Resurrected.
- If you have experienced a divorce and found a new life, then your love has died and you are on the way to getting Resurrected.
- If you have found the courage to leave an abusive or bad relationship, then you have suffered and are on the way to getting Resurrected.
- If you are stumbling your way to self-esteem, self-confidence, self-care, self-love, then you are getting Resurrected.

- If you have experienced trauma and are finding healing, then you have died and are getting Resurrected.
- If you are finding a way to live with anxiety or depression, you are getting Resurrected.
- If life has broken you and you have found it within yourself to get back up and put things back together the best you can, then you have died and are getting Resurrected.
- If you have lost a job or career and are working to see how you can make your contribution in another way, then you are dying and getting Resurrected.
- If you have found your love, lost her and found her again, you have died and gotten Resurrected.
- If you have had family or friend relationships torn apart and find them coming back together, you are getting Resurrected.
- If your suffering has made you more compassionate, less judgmental of others, and more empathic to the suffering of others then you are getting Resurrected.
- If you have gone through something terrible and still have love in your heart, a willingness to extend yourself for someone else, then you have died and are getting Resurrected.
- If you are raising your grandchildren, then you are helping them get Resurrected.
- If you had a family, lost that family and regained a more loving one, you have died and gotten Resurrected.
- If you have been betrayed by your Church, but are finding life in a new Congregation, then you have died and are getting Resurrected.
- If you have doubts about this whole religion thing, but still maintain a shred of hope that God is reality, then you are inching toward Resurrection.
- If you have had the courage to go to a counselor—and make sure he or she is a good one—lots of jerks out there—and you are working through your suffering, then you are dying and getting Resurrected.

- If you are working a 12 step program, then you have died and are getting Resurrected.
- If you are just asking God to help you face your suffering and find healing, then you are on the way to getting Resurrected.
- If you have found God in your suffering and thereby found meaning, then you are really getting Resurrected.
- God wants us to experience Resurrection now—to see it all around us. To see it happening again and again in our lives, so that when our final moment comes, we can, with grace and peace, know in our very being that, after our last breath, we step into the next life where we are Resurrected.
- Our wounds are sacred wounds. They are the path to Resurrection....
- I would love you all of you to return next Sunday where we can continue to die and get Resurrected together. Because that's why we're here at CLC.
- To find ways that we help one another recognize Resurrection in the midst of the dying in this life.
- God loves us and wants the best for us, but our best comes from going through our worst.
- Christ is Resurrected! We are getting Resurrected!
- Song: **Shadow In The Way** by Tift Merritt