

## Reflection and Prayertime – April 13, 2020

### Rooted in Resurrection and Renewal

Thank you for joining me today for a Reflection and Prayertime together. We may come from various faith or religious backgrounds or none at all but I appreciate very much us sharing this time together. Last week I shared thoughts about the Passover and Holy Week leading up through Easter and I hope you had a good holiday with family or friends or just resting, and I know that some of you likely worked on the holiday you observe. I want to be sure that you know that the Easter Sermon, which I usually do in person, was recorded and can be found on VOA Today along with the a video of the song “Come Healing” sung by Jessa Henry and me that we tried to play and had some technical difficulty with last week. You likely know of Leonard Cohen’s song “Hallelujah” but might not know of “Come Healing” with its beautiful and timely lyrics.

I’m reading the Scripture passage today from Luke 24: 13-24 and then 28-32 from the Message.

<sup>13-16</sup> That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

<sup>17-18</sup> He asked, “What’s this you’re discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard what’s happened during the last few days?”

<sup>19-24</sup> He said, “What has happened?”

They said, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn’t find his body. They came

back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

<sup>28-31</sup> They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

<sup>32</sup> Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"

<sup>33-34</sup> They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: "It's really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!"

<sup>35</sup> Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

Last week I mentioned the chaos that was going on in the time of Passover and the days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. Times of great uncertainty and fear and anxiety then and echoes of that in the present. In the past week I don't know about you but I have felt every bit of that as I've listened to people worried about family members, friends, and coworkers. I had shared that a homeless teenaged boy we served had been seriously injured two weeks ago and struggling for his life and on Good Friday life support was removed and he passed away. It was not lost on me that just as Mary bore witness to the suffering of her Son Jesus, the mother of this teenaged boy had sat at his bedside watching him struggle, the victim of an unjust act, and had shed tears of sorrow even before he passed away. Another client in our Northern Ky DD homes passed away just at age 22 this weekend. Some of our staff are grieving loved ones who passed away this week. Good Friday felt like it carried every bit and drop of grief and despair, every last dribble.

My church has had various words that begin with “re” to take us through the season of Lent – review, resist, reset, reborn, rejoice, reset, and resurrection. And having gone through Good Friday, now we find that we are able to root ourselves in resurrection. I’m not suggesting that it’s possible for all of us to always rejoice in the Lord all of the time, but as my pastor said in her Easter sermon, “sometimes during the hardest times our joy is more noticeable because we are so much more aware of our pain, and when we experience a grace, a laugh, a light at the end of the tunnel, or even in the middle of the tunnel, we are just so grateful.”

In the Easter sermon I said that I could relate to Jesus feeling a sense of despair and abandonment when he asked if the cup of grief being served up to him during his pre-crucifixion suffering could be taken. It has always brought me a sense of closeness to Christ to know that he wept when Lazarus died, that he wanted to escape suffering and pain and sorrow just like I do, and that he experienced them in the way that we do.

Walter Brueggemann wrote “the terrible silencing we cannot master”

Holy God who hovers daily round us in fidelity and compassion,

This day we are mindful of another, dread-filling hovering, that of the power of death before which we stand thin and needful.

All our days, we are mindful of the pieces of our lives and the parts of your world that are on the loose in destructive ways.

We notice that wildness midst our fear and our anger unresolved. We mark it on a world of brutality and poverty and hunger all around us. We notice all our days.

But on this day of all days, the great threat looms so large and powerful. It is not for nothing that we tremble at these three hours of darkness and the raging earthquake. It is not for nothing that we have a sense of our helplessness before the dread power of death that has broken loose and that struts against our interest and even against our will.

Our whole life is not unlike the playground in the village, lovely and delightful and filled with squeals unafraid, and then we remember the silencing of all those squeals...in a riddle too deep for knowing. Our whole life is like that playground

and on this dread-filled Friday we pause before the terrible silencing we cannot master.

So we come in our helpless candor this day...remembering, giving thanks, celebrating...but not for one instant unmindful of dangers to ominous and powers too sturdy and threats well beyond us.

We turn eventually from our hurt for children lost. We turn finally from all our unresolved losses to the cosmic grief as the loss of Jesus. We recall and relive that wrenching Friday when the hurt cut to your heart. We see in that terrible hurt, our losses and your full embrace of loss and defeat.

We dare pray while the darkness descends and the earthquake trembles, we dare pray for eyes to see fully and mouths to speak fully the power of death all around, we dare pray for a capacity to notice unflinching that in our happy playgrounds other children die and grow silent, we pray more for your notice and your promise and your healing.

Our only urging on this Friday is that you live this as we must impacted but not destroyed, dimmed but not quenched. For your great staying power and your promise of newness we praise you. It is in your power and your promise that we take our stand this day. We dare trust that Friday is never the last day, so we watch for the new day of life. Hear our prayer and be your full self toward us. Amen.

And then the women are going to the tomb and finding it empty! And in the book of John Mary Magdalene cries in the garden and talks with the man she believes is the gardener but who is the Risen Christ! She runs to the other disciples, not with fear, but with excitement, saying "I have seen the Lord!"

I encourage you, as we have prayertime together now, to think about how you've been rooted in resurrection or renewal this week. I wonder how and where you've seen the Lord!

In a moment just before we pray I will light a candle for Devon, the teenager who passed away at Unity House and for Shane, our northern Kentucky DD person we serve, and for Vera McPheeters son-in-law who passed away, and for Shreeta Waldon's cousin who passed away and Kim Webster's father who died. Who else

shall we pray for today? After each name, I will say O God, and you may say with me if you'd like "Hear our prayer."

And now a closing prayer from David Haas:

God, this is the day! You have made it good! We rejoice in you! Today is the promise of fear being shattered, Today is the promise of cold melting away, Today is the promise of graves opened and tombs emptied, Today is the promise of prisoners freed, Today is the promise of hope, Today is the promise of dried tears, Today is the promise of forgiveness and healing, today is the promise of lies being whisked away, Today is the promise of music and dancing, Today is the promise of life! Today! Your day! Ours to share! We rejoice in you!

I encourage you this week to keep your eyes open to see the work of God, to feel the fire of resurrection or renewal burn within you, and to be rooted in the love of God. Thanks be to God for all that you are doing in creating positive change thanks be to God for strength to do so.