

And He Shall Know You by Name 12 April – Easter Sunday 2020

This morning I preached from my heart. Since we entered Shared Ministry I'm very mindful of time when I preach and thus I've been writing my sermons out. It's a great exercise that encourages me to stretch more, stay focused and teach when I preach.

On a typical week I get home from Worship and after sending out emails and posting the Sermon online I look at the readings for the following week. I revisit them every day and meditate/pray on them as the sermon begins to form. Then on Thursday I write a first draft which gets polished on Saturday afternoon.

Not this week.

This week we had worship from Sunday to Sunday, every single day at 10:00 am. And so, by the time I finished Good Friday my mind and body were in distress and I could do no more. I had a two hour nap which was desperately needed. And that meant I didn't sleep great Friday night.

Saturday I finished the Worship slides and continued to think about Easter Day and how weird this year is, compared to other years. Yes, there will be Alleluias, and yet our buildings remain closed. The Church is celebrating the Resurrection, but not the building. Or is it? Ugh.

Imagine Mary Magdalene. She's running to the tomb, exhausted, terrified and bereft. Her best friend has been killed and there wasn't time for the appropriate preparation. And so, she is off by cover of night, to wash and prepare his body, as was custom, for burial. Except, when she arrived, the tomb was open...she peered in and saw linen cloths, but no body.

She's devastated and runs back to tell Simon Peter and the Unnamed "Beloved" Disciple. They race back, and the UBD arrives before Peter, but they don't go in. They're afraid. Mary catches up to both of them and all three go inside. Peter and UBD realise the tomb is empty and they run back to the safety of their homes. Mary stays.

She breaks down...sobbing uncontrollably. She sees someone whom she mistakes as the gardener, which is easily done as she can barely see through her tears, never mind recognize. It is Jesus.

Now, Mary does NOT need to hear "Calm down" or "It's okay". She needs to feel her grief, fear and frustration. Jesus calls her by name. All he says to her is "Mary" and she knows instantly that it's him. Her tears stop and she runs over to embrace him. He pushes her away and tells her that he can't stay long and where he's going she cannot go with him. Again, she's devastated. And yet, she knows it's him and he's safe. She does not yet realise that he's been resurrected.

When someone tells me to relax, I tense up like a balled up fist. When someone tells me to stop crying, I cry even harder, because I'm angry, not because I'm sad.

We are experiencing something very much like what those disciples were experiencing on that first Easter morning. We live 2,000+ years beyond that first Easter morning. We know how that story unfolded. We've heard it most of our lives. And yet, we don't know when our lives will return to "normal".

To be honest, I don't think we will ever return to how things were before the pandemic. We can't and we shouldn't. We need to emerge from this time of isolation stronger in ourselves, stronger in our communities and stronger in our faith.

I'm tired. No, I'm exhausted. And so I'm taking this next week (Monday to Friday) off. There are two meetings that I must attend, but otherwise I will not be online. There will not be a mid-week email or Saint of the Day on Wednesday. You will receive an email with Worship invitation on Saturday, but other than that, you won't hear from me.

If you happen to be in the neighbourhood of Knox United or Christ Church Anglican please bring some life to the Churches with chalk. Draw a butterfly or flower on the sidewalk or on the Church. Let's show the neighbourhoods that our Churches are open and alive, although the buildings are shuttered.

Next Sunday, the 19th, I encourage you to wear your pjs to Church. It's Holy Humour Sunday and there won't be a Sermon per se, but there will be a lovely service with lots of corny jokes and cartoons.

As you move through this day, recognize the loss you are feeling. Perhaps, you could make new traditions. Call up a friend or relative you've not spoken to in awhile. Make dinner and eat it with another through virtual means. Cook dinner for your neighbour and leave it on their porch for them to enjoy...make sure you call first to ensure they collect it while it's still hot.

Be gentle with yourself as well as with those around you. We are all tired. And short-tempered. Now is not the time to lose our manners.

There isn't much that I know for certain. There is something I believe with everything in me and I pray to God it is true. We don't know when our lives will end. And we don't know what it will be like or where we are going. What I do believe, with everything in me that is when we are brought before our Maker and Creator, we will hear God say our name, and we will know we are "home". Not a physical home; home in the arms of God. Save from all evil and disease. Free from hunger and thirst. Wrapped in the arms of unconditional and eternal love. Simply because we are called by name.

Thank you for your prayers. Please know you are all in mine. It means so much to know that even when I feel empty I am buoyed with your prayers and blessed thoughts.

From my home to yours, I wish you a very Happy Easter.

Alleluia!

Thanks be to God.