

John 20:1-18

The first Easter was a day that was full of questions. St. Mark tells us that the women were asking each other, “*Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?*” St. Luke tells us that the angels asked the women, “*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” And in our Easter Gospel for today, St. John tells us that both the angels, and Jesus asked Mary, “*Why are you weeping?*” So many questions, but no answers. Mary Magdalene, and the other women, had no answer to give to any of these questions.

We do not seem to be confronted with so many questions today. The questions we face are more on the level of, “Where do I hide the Easter eggs?” “Do I prepare ham or turkey for our Easter meal?” Compared to these women on Easter morning, we seem to have everything figured out. Rather than being dumbfounded by all the questions facing the women, we could have handled their questions for them. We know what happened to the body of Jesus. We know that the stone was already rolled away. We know that Jesus had risen. We could have switched places with the angels and not only asked, but answered, every question put forth by, and to, the women on that Easter morning.

Don’t you agree? Well then, perhaps we would not mind being put to the test. Our being here this morning draws us into the Easter story. But even more, our baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection places us squarely into both Good Friday and Easter. As God, through the mouth of His angels, questioned the women, so He can and does question us today.

The question before us in our Easter Gospel is this one, “*Why are you weeping?*” To that question, Mary had no answer. In fact, she might have thought, “What a stupid question! Why wouldn’t I weep? My Lord is dead, and now His body is missing! What? Am I supposed to be happy?” She couldn’t help it, could she? She had to weep. Her world had caved in around her.

Now I don’t see anyone weeping this morning. I don’t hear anyone sobbing and blowing their nose. So Jesus’ question to Mary may not apply to us...at least not today. But He could ask the question, but with a different ending. Not, “*Why are you weeping?*” but “Why are you worrying? Why are you worrying about tomorrow? Why has worry consumed you?” Perhaps He could ask not, “*Why are you weeping?*” but “Why are you angry? Why are you angry at that person in your life? Why has anger taken over your heart?” Maybe it’s not worry or anger that Jesus would question us about, but lust, pornography, gambling, greed. Not “Why has weeping consumed you?” but “Why are you consumed by these?”

Poor Mary Magdalene. Jesus was standing there right in front of her, but she did not recognize Him. Her weeping prevented her from seeing her Lord. That’s what happens to us. Whatever it is in life that consumes us--worry, anger, lust, greed, selfishness, pride...maybe we’re consumed with Facebook, or with work, to the point where these things take over our life. And we fail to recognize our Risen Lord. We fail to see His love and care in our life. We think we have everything figured out; that we have all the answers. But really, we’re no different from Mary and the other women.

This morning in the Confession of our Sin, we heard that sinfulness within the human heart is a condition, like a disease--a fatal disease. You don’t figure out a disease...you treat it. You take medicine for it. That medicine stood facing Mary on Easter morning. She had the same disease that lives within all of us. Sin and unbelief caused her to weep. Had she believed Jesus’ promise that He would rise from the

dead, her life would not have been such a mess that day. But Jesus called her by name--“*Mary*.” When Jesus’ word entered her ears, she recognized her Lord. He was treating her condition with the good news of His resurrection.

Isn’t that why you are here this morning? God brought you here because your disease needs to be treated. And the medicine is the same as it was for Mary. Whatever symptoms we display in our life--worry, pride, lust, greed, or whatever--the disease is the same in all of us. Sin and unbelief lives in the heart. We may have Easter figured out within our mind. We know in our head that Jesus lives. But we still need the medicine of this Risen Christ, for sin and unbelief have taken up residence within our heart.

You see, God because He loves you, does not want you to be controlled by sin and unbelief. Do you think Mary kept weeping after she saw it was Jesus? Of course not! The medicine of the Risen Christ works in the heart to remove the sinful symptoms in our life. I don’t know...if you want to live controlled by anger or lust, by greed and selfishness, by drugs, and alcohol, or whatever--then stay away from the medicine here in church. And no, it’s not out there in the world. The Gospel of the Risen Christ is only given here in God’s Word and Sacraments.

And here is that medicine for you...and this is true for every single one of you, no matter how much worry or anger has taken over your heart; no matter how far you have fallen into lust and greed--your God is not angry at you. He forgives you. That’s why He raised Jesus from the dead--to proclaim to you in this living Lord that He died and rose again for you to save you from sin and unbelief.

“*Mary*,” Jesus called out to her on Easter morning. Well, on this Easter morning, put your name there. Jesus calls you by name. Not to scold you for your past sins. To love you. To take your tears, your worry, your anger, and lust, and say to you, “All this is forgiven because I died for you. But now I am alive. And I want to replace all these in your heart.”

He did this for Mary. The Risen Christ drove out and replaced the unbelief in her heart, and her weeping stopped. That’s what Jesus does for you. We can’t do it. We’re as helpless as Mary was. But when the word of the Risen Christ enters you, that medicine heals you. His word of forgiveness to you drives away the desire to sin. The Risen Christ is in bread and wine on the altar for you. Whenever He enters you, He drives away those sinful things which have control over you.

There are certain cancers in the body that you never get rid of. But you can control them with medicine. That’s what sin is. It will live in us until we die. But the Gospel here in Word and Sacrament--the Word of Christ like good medicine--controls sin so that it does not control us. Every day, our sinful Old Adam raises its ugly head in our heart. But we come here to our Risen Lord, and His words heal and forgive.

This is no placebo you receive here. It’s the real thing. It’s pure forgiveness. Your sins are real, but so is God’s pardon for you. And just as death and the grave was no match for the Risen Christ, neither is the sin and unbelief in your heart.

Today you are Mary Magdalene. Jesus turns to you in love. He conquered death and hell. He conquered your sin. He is Lord. And He wants to be Lord of your heart and your life. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.