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March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024

Scripture: John 20: 1-18

Sermon Title: Resurrection Love

Prayer...

Introduction:

On Good Friday a couple of days ago, I took time to walk the Stations of the Cross at our Newberg Peace Garden in the morning and with my family in the afternoon. Both were meaningful times to remember the love of Jesus for us and for the whole world. In the morning, I came to Station Six, which shows the face of Jesus. At Station six we are invited to remember the story of Veronica who wipes the face of Jesus on his way to the cross. What touched me as I look at the image of Jesus' face is that on the wood where the face of Jesus is shown, there was a drop of water from the rain just below Jesus' eye. It was as if nature was reminding me of the tear drops of Jesus as he journeyed to the cross and died for me, for us. Tears are

often an expression of love and Jesus' tears were both from his pain and an expression of love for the world as he suffered. I want to remind you that Jesus cries over you when you are in pain. Another image from the Stations of the Cross is station 15, where we witness that Jesus is risen from the dead. It is a joyful station that has deep meaning because the first fourteen stations explore the suffering of Jesus. The 15<sup>th</sup> station is full of joy because Jesus is risen from the dead. In our Peace Garden, you will notice that the 15<sup>th</sup> station is close to our tree that is starting to bud again. It is the tree whose seed is originally from Hiroshima Japan. The budding of the tree after a long barren winter fills me with hope and reminds me of the resurrection of Jesus and that the love and peace of Jesus through his resurrection heals the wounds of war and violence.

In our story today, we follow the journey of Mary Magdalene as she comes to the tomb. Mary is shocked to find that the stone of the tomb is rolled back. She is concerned that someone stole the body

of Jesus. She runs to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple, presumed to be John. Peter and John run to the tomb and after noticing the empty linen wrappings, they leave to go home.

Mary stays weeping outside the tomb. Then she bends down to look into the tomb and sees two angels lying where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. The angels ask Mary why she is weeping. She explains that she is sad because someone has taken away the body of Jesus. Then she sees someone who appears to be the gardener. She wonders if he has taken the body.

The gardener is actually Jesus himself and when he says Mary's name, she cries out Rabbouni or teacher. She goes over to apparently give him a big hug, but he directs her to go and tell the disciples that he will be ascending to his Father. She goes and tells the disciples the amazing news that she has seen the Lord.

As we remember the joy of Mary on the day she saw Jesus after his resurrection, I want to remind us of the resurrection love of Jesus.

Where do we see this love?

We see the love of Jesus as he and the angels meet Mary in her grief. Jesus chooses to reveal himself first to Mary Magdalene. Jesus loves all his disciples, but I wonder if there is something special about his friendship with Mary. They share a special moment together in the garden. The Gospel writer John is no doubt telling this story in this way to remind his listeners that just as Adam and Eve were in the original garden of Eden with God, Jesus' resurrection also takes place in a garden and Jesus revealing himself to Mary demonstrates Jesus' special empowerment of women and his love for all of creation.

We see the love of Jesus in this story also when he encourages Mary to spread the good news that he is risen. The love of Jesus does not end with him, but is carried by Mary to the other disciples. This is a reminder that we too are to carry the good news of the resurrection of Jesus to the world and to share his love with those in need.

In John Philip Newell's book *The Rebirthing of God* that we as a church have explored during Lent, there is a chapter on Reconnecting with Love. He writes about the Celtic Cross. Newell shares,

“One of the distinctive features of the Celtic cross is its conjoining of symbols. There is the cross symbol- pointing to the way of Christ, to the love that can bear all things—and there is the circle symbol—pointing to the oneness or interrelatedness of all things. One of the significant features of the Celtic cross is that the cross symbol and the circle symbol share the same center. They emerge from the same point. So the Celtic cross celebrates that Christ and creation spring forth from the same Source. They both emerge from the heart of God. The deeper we move in the Christ mystery, the closer we come to the One who is the origin of creation. The deeper we move in the mystery of Creation, the closer we come to the Presence that Christ embodies. Deepest in both, and deepest in us, is the yearning

for union, to remember the oneness from which we have come, and to live and move as one again.”

Newell reminds us that both the cross and the resurrection speak of God’s love for the world.

On this Easter Sunday as we reflect on the suffering of Jesus and his joyful resurrection, may we both receive the gift of love as Mary did in the garden and may we share the love of Jesus born from the power of the resurrection.

May we join with all creation in proclaiming the good news of Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

I hope this Easter you may also take time to receive the encouragement you need from Jesus. Is there an area in your life, where you need resurrection love from God to come and bring healing and wholeness? So often we go through life doing our best to make it day to day but fail to cry out to Jesus for his resurrection love. He sees your tears. He understands your fears and doubts.

Jesus wants to bring you resurrection love this morning. Just call out his name and like Mary, you will hear Jesus call you by name. He will cover you with his love and will give you strength for today and hope for tomorrow. He may not always remove our pain but he will join us on the journey of suffering and bring us love and courage and grace. Today I want to encourage you to bring your whole heart to Jesus, he wants to meet you in your suffering and bring you resurrection love.

As we cultivate a friendship with Jesus, similar to the one that Mary Magdalene had with Jesus, we are invited to join in sharing resurrection love with our neighbors and with those who suffer sometimes without even knowing God personally. For many life feels like a lonely journey without much meaning. We are invited as followers of Jesus to share resurrection love with the lonely and those struggling with fear and confusion. The beauty of the resurrection is that love is more powerful than hate and love is stronger than death. Resurrection in Jesus is the hope of the world

that we get to share. May this truth both encourage us today and may this wisdom empower us to bring love to our world. Enjoy your Easter and may Jesus fill you with resurrection love!

Please pray with me...

Thank Jesus for your resurrection love and for the beauty of your creation. Just as Mary experienced a tender moment with you in the garden, may our hearts open to the intimacy we may find in your love and may we share your love with those who are in need. In the Name of Jesus, Our Risen Lord. AMEN.



John 20:1-18

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

The Resurrection of Jesus

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus’s head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who reached

the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, 9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to their homes.

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look[a] into the tomb, 12 and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir,[b] if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew,[c] “Rabbouni!”

(which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ” 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and she told them that he had said these things to her.