

Chris Murphy

April 5, 2026

Scripture: John 20: 1-18

Sermon Title: Resurrection Love

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. (This is the Word of the Lord)

Prayer...

Introduction:

Easter Sunday is the time each year as the Christian community where we remember possibly the most important truth of the Christian faith. Possibly the most important belief of the Christian faith is that Jesus rose from the dead. Why is this so important? It is important because the resurrection provides us with the primary hope that we long to know. The truth that Love wins. Resurrection love is the answer to the persistent cry of this suffering world. Although we live in the vulnerability of human experience with the reality of war, poverty, disease, and mental health concerns, we also live with the beauty of the human experience that is grounded in the understanding that God’s answer to the world’s pain is the resurrection of Jesus.

Resurrection love is the answer.

My Pop, Bruce Murphy was telling me recently of his experience walking the station of the cross during our Lenten retreat. As he walked the Stations, he joined Jesus on the road to Calvary. He reflected on Jesus’ suffering, but also the suffering of this world. My dad grew more sad as he walked. The feeling he had is that everything is falling apart for Jesus and for his followers. Everyone is disappointed that Jesus’ life and ministry is going to end so terribly because they had hope that Jesus would deliver the people. As my Pop arrived at the

15th station, which is the empty tomb that highlights the resurrection, he regained hope that even in our world with its deep suffering and the fear of all that appears to be falling apart in our own nation or in the world, there can be hope in Jesus and his resurrection love. There is hope for the future because Jesus is alive and loves us. The resurrection is the surprise that is not expected. During Jesus' journey to the cross, it feels like everything is over, but the resurrection is the truth that this world is not over and our God continues to reign and work with us for the kingdom cause of peace, justice, and love. The resurrection of Jesus is the hope we need in this world.

I wonder whether you have ever felt like your life is all over or completely lost. I imagine all of us can remember a time when we were gripped with grief and fear that life was crumbling. Jesus wants to remind us today of the resurrection.

Do you notice in our Easter story that Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb in tears. Both the angels and the supposed gardener, who is actually Jesus, ask the question, why are you weeping? I don't think this question is asked with judgement. It is a question asked out of compassion. Why are you weeping? The angels and Jesus are full of compassion, but also ready with a surprise. Mary is sure everything is over, but Jesus calls her by name and lets her know that she will be alright. Better than that, Jesus will transform her life with his love and she will become one of the great apostles of the church.

Friends, Jesus wants to meet you in your sorrow, grief, confusion, and fear. If you feel all life is lost and its over, it is not. God has a purpose and plan for your life. If you feel like, my best days are over and I am nearing the end of life, be careful to not give up hope. Whether you are in the last lap of your earthly life or you have many miles to run, as long as you are here on earth, you have a purpose to embrace the resurrection love of Jesus and keep spreading his love to others.

But how do we walk in the resurrection love that Jesus invites us to experience? In the 5th and final chapter of his book Surrender to Love, David Benner reminds us that we can embody love in this world. We can become

love and we can be love for others. But in order to walk in this love, we must surrender to God's love for us. Benner suggests that being love is what humans were made to be because we are made in the image of God, who is love. Being love or becoming love does not happen through our willful efforts to love others but rather our love grows from resting in the unconditional love God has for us. Love is not something we muster up from within rather we are to surrender to God's love, which is a death to the ego, and then we can join God in loving our world, not in our own power, but through the grace of God's love living in us. David Benner writes vulnerably about his own struggle to love others. He shares, "My own struggles to become more loving have been the most discouraging part of my Christian spiritual journey. But as I have begun to learn to come back through the cross to the extravagant love of God for me, slowly my heart is beginning to thaw. Ever so slowly my heart is becoming God's heart- larger and more tender than anything I could have ever expected or experienced as a result of my most persistent effort. If God's heart is to become mine, I must know his heart. Meditating on God's love has done more to increase my love than decade of effort to be more loving."

This quote of Benner truly resonates with me. At different times of my life, I have tried to be more loving, but in my experience love as an act of willfulness is not the best way to love. Love flows more naturally, when we first learn to experience God's love through spiritual practices.

We are able to cultivate a life of love by spiritual practices that require us to let go of control of our lives and put our trust in God. Examples of spiritual practices include: Prayer, meditation, breathwork, yoga, exercise, nutrition, spiritual direction, therapy, social justice activism, and evangelism through sharing the good news of Jesus and his resurrection life. All of these practices cultivate a love relationship with God that can give us hope. Besides individual spiritual practices, we also need the practice of community to help foster deep love.

David Benner describes love as a movement from me to we. He writes,

“Egocentricity and its bondage of the self is always the enemy of the genuinely self-surrendering and self transcending love. When I live with “me” as the basic reference point for my life, I experience a fundamental existential alienation. Not only am I alienated from others, but paradoxically I am also alienated from my deepest self. For my deepest and truest self is not an isolated self but finds its meaning and fulfillment only in the “we” of community.”

Benner also reminds us that since love involves caring for others there is a necessary part of the Christian life that requires an honest awareness of the cross. We come to love through the reality of the cross, with its recognition of human sin, vulnerability, and failure. In the humility of the cross, we are able to let go of the need to make ourselves more loving. Becoming love is not the fruit of self-improvement effort, but rather the fruit of experiencing God’s gracious love in my weakness.

Thankfully as we grow in love, we begin to understand the great mystery that we as humans are made for love. Benner writes, “Because God is love, and because human beings are made in God’s image, love is who we are. Love is not first and foremost something that we do. More, basically, it is who we are.”

I wonder if you have any stories of resurrection love. I wanted to share the vision I had of love with you. I share this story every year or two with our congregation. It reminds me of the purpose of our lives and the example of Jesus who gave his life for us.... To help us understand my story, I want to remind you of four gardens in Scripture- Genesis- Garden of Eden, Garden of Gethsemane, Garden of the Resurrection, the Garden of Heaven. My story is of the garden of heaven – Paradise in Scripture refers to a garden.

(Tell story of experience on the garden of heaven- the mountain of God’s love)

Friends, this Easter season, may we spread the good news of resurrection love. Jesus left the garden of heaven to meet us in the valley of our lives. One day we will join Jesus in a heavenly garden. While on earth, we are to bring the hope of the resurrection to those who are suffering in the valley of life’s

disappointments and the perils of our world with its violence and evil. We come with the message that life is not over. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Let us say it together. He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed. He is Risen. He is Risen indeed. And because he arose, we have hope and we have the mandate to spread his love to all creation. AMEN and AMEN.

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