

Centre Street Congregational Church, UCC

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We Remember

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I am working with my Easter 2022 sermon toward a project, so I am not putting it online. However, here is an Easter sermon I wrote 3 years ago on the same text. Easter Blessings to you!

Let us pray . . .

In the dark and quiet space that is no longer nighttime and not yet morning, I imagine the women gathered the spices in silence.

Remembering their Jewish customs, they were hoping to provide

one final anointing of Jesus' body to both honor it and control the smell of its decay.

As they set out for his tomb, I imagine each woman was lost in her own grief, remembering the crushing shouts and barbaric jeers only days earlier, as Jesus was forced to carry his cross through the noisy crowds in Jerusalem.

But this morning, walking the darkened and quiet dirt road,
it was Jesus' absence that was deafening.

I imagine they also no doubt remembered the unbearable humiliation and brutality forced upon him by the cowardice of an empire threatened by God's new world vision and the things of love.

And the women would have remembered their own powerlessness as well and the overwhelming fear if they had dared obstruct the insanity.

They'd certainly remembered participating in complete helplessness.

Watching in utter horror.

They would be haunted by "if only"s.

And as they approached the tomb, they would also remember the immovable heaviness of the stone, but surely, some guards would help them roll it aside.

But you know, I imagine that the worst of the women's memories came with each broken heart beat as they fathomed their despair at the loss of their beloved teacher and friend.

The One who stirred souls, speaking truth, giving hope and healing.

The One who taught about the nearness of God.

The One who sought no retaliation, only forgiveness.

And now it was over.

Only painful memories,

a suffocating void

and a body remained.

But as the dawning rays pierced their memories, I imagine that the women had no idea what memory would soon be brought to life upon encountering the dazzling men and the empty tomb.

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

He is not here, but has risen.

Remember how he told you what would happen?

Memories and remembering.

In its own dazzling way, Luke's resurrection story elicits the memory of every generation of readers and hearers — believers and seekers — where somewhere in the deepest recesses of our selves — In the dark and quiet space that is no longer DNA and not yet understood — imagine gathering the memories of God's assurances.

Assurances that are rooted in the cosmos.

Assurances that rise above anything we might do to destroy them.

Assurances that were created in the image and likeness of God.

When Jesus began teaching on God's assurances, God's love in the new covenant, he revealed the Kingdom of God and in doing so, he showed a love and a way that turned our understandings of God, kingdoms and rule on its head because

It was a love and a way that made room for all at the table —
no need to earn a place anymore —

It was a love and a way that sought unity — no need to
compete, perform or compare anymore —

It was a love and a way that said in the beginning, is now, and
ever will be — no need to be afraid anymore —

And because truth has a way of getting our attention, I imagine
Jesus knew it was a message that would baffle his followers,
stir up the curious
and provoke the powerful.

It was a message irrevocably held in the vast arms of a transcendent
love that defied a rule and way that was selective, divisive and
colonizing.

And as such, it was a message that frightened and threatened.

So the powers that be tried to end it,

tried to say

it's over.

But, like the women at the tomb,

we too, remember that he is not here.

So we don't go looking for the living among the dead because

He is, as Marcus Borg writes, *"still loose in the world. He's still out there, still here, still recruiting people to share his passion for the Kingdom of God – a transformed world here and now.*

Because it's not over."

Remember that.

He is every act of mercy, justice, grace and love.

Remember that.

He is every effort that reaches across divided lines.

Remember that.

He is every moment that shines light in the darkness.

Remember that.

He is every sincere prayer, no matter how poorly or magnificently offered.

He is food and fuel and diapers and cooking lessons for marginalized school kids.

He is your last \$20 pressed into the hand of a teacher.

He is because we believe and we follow.

He is because it is not over.

And as Easter morning continues to unfold, let the reminder and the remainder of this day dazzle you, look for Christ to be alive and well among the living.

Because he is here.

And when life tries to crush you,

shout you down,

or place unbearable burdens upon your shoulders,

and you lie awake in the dark and quiet space that is no longer

nighttime and not yet morning,

let God's cosmically eternal voice gather and anoint you ~ Beloveds

~ in the assurances that it's not over.

Because Christ is Risen, Alleluia!

Remember that.