

Psalm 118

¹O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

²Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

¹⁴The Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

¹⁵There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;

¹⁶the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

¹⁷I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

¹⁸The Lord has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death.

¹⁹Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

²²The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

²³This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

John 20:1-18

²⁰Early 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. ²So 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." ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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." ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to 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.'"

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

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Last week we entered triumphantly with loud acclaim into Jerusalem. Not so much the literal Jerusalem as the Jerusalem of our hearts. We paraded through the streets with the crowds, threw our palm branches and coats in the road, to cushion the steps of the donkey who carried our Messiah. A Messiah that was going to overthrow the Roman occupiers, the Messiah that was going to lead a revolution. After all that is what Messiah’s do. They bring about a revolution, they over throw the occupying government, they bring about God’s kingdom here on earth- Everybody knows what a messiah looks like.

There is a great Chinese story called **Everybody Knows What a Dragon Looks Like**. It is a long and beautiful story which I do not have the time to tell this morning. The upshot is that a Chinese city must prepare for an attack and decides they need a dragon to defend and protect it. Everybody has their own idea of what a dragon looks like, The Military leaders are certain a Dragon is a fierce warrior, the Scholars are certain a Dragon is wise, the merchants say a Dragon is rich and splendid. Everybody is sure that their idea is the right idea. A Dragon arrives but everybody pays him no mind, because he is in the guise of a shabby old man. Now everybody knows what a dragon looks like, and no matter what their idea is- this surely ain’t it-this old man cannot be their protector and savior, because he does not look like what they know a dragon looks like. And yet, as it turns out- he is.

The story reminds me of the story of Jesus. On Palm Sunday the crowds gather to welcome their savior, the messiah, the one who will lead the revolution, everyone knows what a messiah looks like.

They wanted a revolution. But what they got was a resurrection.

This morning we find ourselves at the tomb. Mary arrives first. Mourning. Weeping. Blinded by her own tears. She runs to tell the others that someone has stolen the body of their friend. Peter and the Beloved Disciple, (unnamed- a genius of storytelling, the Beloved Disciple, whose name is Michael, or Rosa, or Anita. or Ruby, or Harold....) the unnamed beloved disciple and Peter arrive, they see, they accept this horrid turn of events, and they return to their room.

They are afraid, they lock themselves in because of that fear. They sit and wait, imagining the worst is coming, and how much worse can it be, not only have they lost their leader and friend, not only is there not going to be a revolution, but now it

appears someone has stolen the body of their friend and leader. they wonder, will we be next? Are we about to be persecuted, rounded up, perhaps attacked in our own backyard? Best to stay behind locked doors.

Mary alone remains in the garden. A woman alone in the garden, more genius story telling. Woman- We can not help but conjure up images of Eve in the garden of Eden. This is not accidental. John begins his Gospel with these words- **In the beginning...** John is intent on telling a new Creation story. And this is the high point of that story. Woman, the mother of all humanity- Woman- read "human one". "Woman- why do you weep?" the angels ask her. Angels she does not even recognize as angels. Now angels almost always say- "be not afraid" when they encounter mortals. But not these two. Were they in a guise like the angels Lot entertained in Sodom? Or the the ones Abraham entertained under the Oak Tree? Did they appear as common gardeners? Maybe Mary is just too wrapped up in her grief, perhaps her vision is distorted because of her tears. At any rate she does not recognize the angels for who and what they are. Greif can do that to us. Pain can do that to us. Wounds can do that to us.

And then another Gardener comes, he asks her, "Woman, why are you crying?" Even through her grief she perceives this man has some kind of authority, perhaps he is the head gardener?- Sir if you have taken him somewhere, please, tell me where and I will go and tend to his body.

"Mary...Mary...."

She is startled, taken aback, wary-How does this man know my name? She wipes her eyes, she turns, and only now she recognizes her beloved. She reaches out and grabs hold of him. She embraces him, she hugs him for all she is worth. She can not release him....

At some point Jesus says to her, "you have to let me go". "You can not keep holding on to me". The Greek is clear, it is not a simple- "don't touch me". The verb refers to a state of continuous action, "you can not continue to hold on to me. You have to let go".- You have to stop holding on to your ideas about what I was, about who I am. Everyone knows what a messiah looks like, right? You and the others, were disappointed, but don't be- for behold I am doing a new thing. You wanted a revolution, What you got was a resurrection. Everyone knows what a revolution looks like- or do we?

Because it turns out the resurrection is the revolution. The revolution is happening, but it is a revolution of love. And my friends this is the good news- This is the word of hope and healing this broken world needs-John begins his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word." And that Word is Love. This revolution is a revolution of the power of Love and it is not a lone event that happened some 2000 years ago that we celebrate today- because the tomb is still empty! The revolution continues each and every day in our hearts and our lives. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.- Amen

