

## “When We Remember”

Luke 24:1-12

During the just-completed season of Lent, our worship focus was on the women in Jesus’ ministry. Over those six Sundays, we pondered Biblical scenes where women extended hospitality to Jesus or provided financial support for his group as they traveled. We heard of moments when women displayed faith, insight, and courage as events unfolded, often in contrast to men in the same accounts. We focused on Luke’s narrative as he offers the most frequent depiction of women in those three years, but when it comes to Easter, he joins with the other gospel writers in affirming how women were the first to learn and share the good news.

We heard his depiction a few moments ago, telling of how women go to Jesus’ tomb at early dawn on that day. The plan is to complete preparation of his lifeless body for eternal rest, yet upon arriving, they are stunned to find that the stone covering the entrance to his burial place has been rolled to the side. They enter and while trying to make sense of what they are seeing, two men in dazzling clothing suddenly appear. Terrified, the women bow their faces.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” the messengers asks. “He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again?”

For us, the Biblical moment those angels are referencing can be found in the 9th chapter of Luke when Jesus offered the first prediction of what would happen to him in Jerusalem. For the women, though, it wasn’t Scripture the angel was asking them to recall, but a moment when they had been present. “Remember how he told you?” Given the shock of what they are experiencing inside the tomb, it is remarkable they can even recall their name, much less something Jesus had said months earlier, but they do. “Then they remembered his words,” Luke says, “and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.” Only then does the gospel writer identify the first witnesses to the resurrection. “Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.”

Among all of the wonder of that day is how an act of remembrance sets things in motion. A group of women is asked if they remember what Jesus had once said to them and when they do, the word begins to spread. Remembrance was a critical piece to that first Easter. It still is.

As our gathering this morning is marked by remembrance. For members of DPC, being together like this allows us to look around and remember some of the other special individuals who make up our body of faith. For those of you worshiping with us for the first time, your presence is also a cause for joy, as you have come here remembering the invitation from a friend or having gotten word online. For many of you, this day recalls a previous Easter when gathered in a packed sanctuary or bundled up at a sunrise service. For all of us, this day includes remembrance of what we’ve gone through during the past year—the losses and restrictions--making clear our need to be with others, even as the masks and social distancing reveal the pandemic is not over. Remembrance shapes this time, but sometimes our memory needs help.

The story is told, for instance, of a children's Sunday School teacher who was tired of all the commercialism that can accompany the day. She felt that all the talk of bunnies and eggs, take away from its key purpose, so one Easter she began class by asking the children if they

knew what that day was called. In one voice, they shouted "Easter!" "What do we celebrate on Easter?" she continued and one little girl waved her arm frantically. "Easter was when Jesus was born," the child said "and we give each other presents." "No, dear, that's Christmas," the teacher gently replied. "Does anyone else have an idea?" A boy raised his hand. "Bobby, do you know?" "I sure do," he said. "Easter is when we all dress up in costumes and go to people's houses and they give us candy." "No," she sighed, "that's Halloween."

"Can *anyone* tell me what Easter is about?" Susie, the child who always had the right answer said, "I can" so the teacher asked her to tell the whole class. "Easter is when Jesus died and was put in the tomb," she started. Her teacher smiled. "After three days," the child continued, "the angel came and rolled the stone away from the tomb, and..." "Yes, Susie," the teacher said excitedly, "that's right, tell us the rest!" The child concluded, "Jesus came out of the tomb, and if he sees his shadow there's only six more weeks of winter!" (Eculaugh, 2/15/96)

Even in the land of Punxsutawney Phil, I am confident our children would not answer in that way, yet their incomplete understanding makes clear the need for all of us, no matter what our age, to grow in understanding all that he told us; to deepen our remembrance.

One New Testament professor wrote, "Remembering is often the activating of the power of recognition. For this reason alone it is most important that the teacher and the preacher share with the listeners the story of Jesus and of the church. Such recitals may not strike fire at the time or be heard as matters of burning relevance; however the time will come when the congregation will remember and it will make all the difference." Such was the case for the women in the tomb of long ago, yet as that same scholar concluded, "one cannot remember what one has not heard." (Craddock, Fred. *Interpretation: Luke*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1990. p. 283)

It is with such counsel in mind that I want to share some of what Jesus said. My list is not exhaustive, but representative of his words. I offer it as a reminder or as a first hearing of the many life-giving instructions from our Savior and thus ones that can yet transform your journey.

For it was Jesus who said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people," and who declared, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It was Jesus who said, "Pray then in this way, 'Our Father who art in heaven...'" and "Let the children come until me." It was Jesus who said "Come unto me all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest" and who declared "I am the bread of life." It was Jesus who said, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" and later added, "as you did it unto one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me." It was Jesus who said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son," and "A new commandment I give you that you are to love one another." It was Jesus, on a Thursday night, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me" and the next day--from the cross--prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." It was Jesus who said, "Go and make disciples of all nations," and then "remember I am with you always, to the end of the age."

On the first Easter, divine messengers began "Remember how he told you..." and the women did and went to tell others. Sounds like the best response for us on this Easter, too.