

Announcements:

**ALL PUBLIC
SERVICES ARE
CANCELED FOR
THE MONTH OF
APRIL**

**York Haven
Prayer Breakfast
5/2/20-cancelled**

**Ladies Luncheon
5/6/20-cancelled**

Announc

STRINESTOWN SON

Volume 3 April 12 2020

FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR JODY

HE IS RISEN!!

Easter 2020 is different from just about every Easter we have celebrated in the past. We have had to find creative ways to celebrate the greatest news there is, our Savior LIVES! Maybe we can't be together physically to sing our favorite Easter hymns and gather in the early morning to celebrate the dawn of a new day in Christ, but our hearts are united through the Holy Spirit! The joy we have as followers of the one and only risen LORD can't be contained to one place or one time – it is for all people for all time!

This period of social separation may really be a gift. Our schedules have been cleared of all events, our church calendar is on hold and we are encouraged to stay home as much as possible. It gives us time that is free of distractions and busy-ness to focus on what is really important to us. As a church, this pause button gives us time to refocus on God and what he wants for us as his representation in our world. We continue to think about what that means through the following things:

1. **Celebrate!** Think of new ways you can celebrate the JOY of Easter! The news of the resurrection brings praise to our hearts and minds. Jesus has conquered sin and death and walks with us every moment of our lives! That is a reason for a party! **“They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.” (Ps. 145:7)**
2. **Pray!** Jesus modeled a life of prayer. He often prayed by himself, but he also prayed with and for his disciples in a group. The disciples prayed as they waited for the Holy Spirit. The early church prayed together, and the very foundations of their locations were shaken. Prayer is powerful, especially when we pray together using the scripture as our guide. **“When they had entered the city, they went upstairs to the upper room where they were staying [indefinitely]; that is, Peter, and John and [his brother] James...All these with one mind and one purpose were continually devoting themselves to prayer, [waiting together] along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” (Acts 1:13-14 - AMP)**
3. **Life Links!** Use the purple links to continue thinking about what the Lord is speaking to you in this season. We started our life links chain on Ash Wednesday with the intent of adding to it throughout Lent. So keep jotting down things the Lord has laid on your heart in prayer and we will add them

to our “chain” when we are able to one again celebrate together in person! **“Speak Lord for your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:9)**

Happy Easter! Jesus conquered death and the grave and rose just as he said he would!

What a glorious promise; what a glorious day!

If you need someone to pick up groceries, prescriptions, etc. please call me (Pastor Jody) 717.332.4804 or Tina S. 717.495.0663.

This newsletter is available electronically. If you would prefer it sent via email to help save on the costs of mailing, please let us know by emailing pastorjody@strinestown.org

EASTER SUNDAY!!

Call to Worship:

Shout for Joy
The tomb is empty
Clap your Hands
Death is cheated
Dance and Sing
Christ is risen
Christ is risen indeed!

Song – Christ Arose! (Robert Lowry)

Low in the Grave he lay - Jesus my Savior!
Waiting the coming day - Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave he arose,
With a mighty triumph o’er his foes,
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And he lives forever with his Saints to reign
He Arose! He Arose!
HALLELUJAH! CHRIST AROSE!

Message from Pastor Jody:

**“It’s All About Relationship”
Called by Name! Our relationship with the RISEN LORD!
John 20:1-18**

Introduction

**What a glorious day! The day to CELEBRATE the RISEN LORD!
We celebrate because Jesus is our LORD and he knows us by NAME!**

When we were still able to go out into crowds, we may have been out with friends of family or even our kids. As we were shopping or mingling in the crowd, we need to get the attention of those we came with. If you have been in a school meeting or other place where parents and kids are together, it’s not uncommon to hear someone call “Mom!” Lots of us would turn only to realize the call wasn’t for us, we just reacted! But there is something different about the voice of a loved one that makes us stop and look up. As parents we can pick out our kids’ voices in the middle of the “mom” or “dad” call! Our intimate relationship with our family makes us able to recognize their voices above all of the others!

Or maybe we are out with our friends or family somewhere and they are trying to get our attention. We just don't hear them in the middle of the noise around us until they call us by a very unique name. This would happen to me if my kids were to call me by my first name, I would definitely look up from what I was doing! They called me by NAME. Again, the relationship I have with them makes me respond to a voice I know and hearing my name called.

We're going back today to the first Easter morning looking at a relationship that was thought to be over. Jesus was gone. His family and the disciples had watched him die on the cross. He was gone and the period of official mourning for the family had begun. The relationship the disciples, including Mary, had with Jesus had brought them new insights into who God is. That relationship would be one that would change everything for ALL eternity. The disciples knew the voice of the savior and HE knew each one BY NAME.

John writes the account of that incredible moment that would change the world forever!

1. A stunning discovery – The relationship is gone

John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Now that sabbath was over Mary goes to spend time at the tomb of her beloved friend and teacher. She went to the garden to grieve which was not uncommon in that day. Her relationship with Jesus had been deeper than anything she had experienced, and his death seemed unimaginable. And then even more confusion and devastation...the body is gone.

- As we are going through this period of public distancing right now, there are more restrictions on visiting people in the hospital and other health care facilities. Some families are experiencing the pain of knowing their loved one has died alone without family and/or friends nearby. Funeral and memorial services may need to be placed on hold.
- Finding closure in these kinds of circumstances is difficult and adds to the grief the family and friends are already experiencing.
- Being able to have closure for friends and loved ones is an important part of our relationship with them.
- Mary was experiencing a similar kind of grief. She wants to be there to say her goodbyes, to mourn the loss of the deepest relationship she has ever had, but Jesus is Gone! How will she find closure?

Mary is so shocked by what she finds at the tomb and immediately runs to find the disciples to tell them what she has found.

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Mary had delivered unbelievable news. The testimony of women was considered unreliable at best and so Peter and John run to the tomb to verify the story. It seems like a case of seeing is believing.

- Sometimes we get news that we just can't understand. It is just too big for us to take in. We need to see and experience the news for ourselves before we can believe it to be true.

- In thinking about our relationship with Jesus, again we realize that we cannot rely on the witness of others instead of our personal experience with him.
- Although the disciples discounted the eyewitness account of Mary, at some level they needed to see for themselves. And they found out it was true, Jesus was Gone, even the graveclothes had been left behind.
- Once they laid eyes on the scene, they realized Mary was right, Jesus' body really WAS gone. There was nothing more to be done, so they left.

Sometimes we react the same way. Once we find out the truth about a situation, we have seen it with our own eyes, there isn't anything we can do. The relationship we had is gone. So we return to our normal routines, somehow piecing our lives back together.

But then something happens in that garden...a new realization, new information that changes everything about what had been seen.

2. An unrecognized relationship

The disciples have seen all that they need to see. They go back home leaving Mary alone again in the garden. There's just nothing more to say...but that's not where the story ends!

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

Mary is obviously grieving the loss of the relationship with her beloved friend and teacher. And now it is compounded by the fact that his body is gone, and the disciples don't have any answers either. Can things get any worse?

- Then Mary takes the opportunity to look more closely inside the tomb. She sees something even more startling – two angels!
- It's almost as if she is so stunned in her grief that the fact that she is having a conversation with ANGELS doesn't even register.
- Her sadness and shock are so raw that she pours out her heart, answering the question through tears.
- I believe we can all relate to this. We receive shocking news that so overwhelms us that we go on autopilot so to speak. We can't take in anything else...It's just too much.

And then there is one more encounter in the early morning hours of THE first day of the week...a new day had come, and Mary was about to see with her own eyes what she thought was gone forever. Little did she know this was the beginning of a NEW era! Her life and relationship with Jesus was about to change in a way she never thought possible...

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Again, Mary is asked why she is crying, this time by someone she knew but could not recognize. Her world had be shattered and her grief so raw, all she wanted to do was know where Jesus' body was so that she could find some closure. I don't believe her reaction to any of this was unusual. She and the rest of Jesus' disciples, friends and family had been through a terrible ordeal. No one should have to witness that kind of brutality, especially on someone who is innocent.

- Who she was looking for was standing right in front of her but she just couldn't see him. It's almost as if she just can't take one more thing or one more question.
- Sometimes our grief is so overwhelming that we don't see Jesus standing right in front of us. The situation is so difficult that our world seems it will never be the same.
- How can we believe that our savior standing before us?

And then...the moment that it all comes together. With a very simple and loving act, Jesus reveals himself for the first time in his resurrected state!

3. Relationship transformed – Called by NAME!

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

How can this be? Jesus is supposed to be dead-Mary watched him DIE! But no, HE'S ALIVE and standing right in front of her calling her name!

- Let's stop for a moment right here. Use your imagination in this scene. Put yourself in Mary's place.
- It was not until Jesus called Mary by name that she recognized who He was! Her teacher, her friend, her LORD!
- It was if Mary snapped out of her overwhelming grief when she heard the familiar voice speak her name. Sort of how we look up when we here a familiar voice calling us in the middle of a crowd!
- Jesus says "(your name here!)" – He is calling YOU by name! The risen Messiah has conquered death! HE is ALIVE and he wants a relationship with YOU!

Mary's tears of grief must have immediately changed to tears of Joy! Her travel to the garden to mourn became the place of celebration! JESUS is ALIVE and he called her by NAME! She may not have understood how or what was happening, but her relationship was restored with the LORD...her relationship had been transformed into a celebration of LIFE!

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

We don't really know the exact meaning of verse 17. Jesus could have meant something like "now that you've seen, greeted and embraced me, don't stay here, but GO TELL the rest of the disciples what you have seen." In other words, go spread the Gospel, the good news that JESUS is ALIVE!

Mary goes as instructed to the disciples with the incredible news...The MESSIAH was alive! HE is God's anointed – HE is KING!

- We know that Jesus death for our sin and resurrection to life is at the center of our Christian faith.
- Mary was an eyewitness and her experience and story are so important that all four gospels in the New Testament have her story.
- She is the first to see Jesus resurrected! She is the bearer of GOOD NEWS which she shares with others!
- She is told by the Savior himself to tell others what she has seen – to share her first hand experience!

The tomb is empty, Jesus is ALIVE and he calls us by name, just like Mary! Even in the midst of our grief, there is Joy in knowing we have a relationship with the Savior – not a formal, distant one, but one so familiar that he calls us by our first name!

Conclusion

Mary's life was dramatically changed by something very simple; hearing a familiar voice calling her by name. She had gone through the full range of emotions. She was stunned to find the empty tomb making her grief more intense as her relationship with Jesus was gone. Then, Jesus stands before her, but she can't recognize him because of her situation. And then, her relationship with him is transformed through hearing her name and she MUST get tell others the good news she has! **HE IS ALIVE!**

I love this story. Thinking about Jesus calling my name softly brings peace to my heart, knowing that his love is so great that he died for me even though I often pretend I don't hear his voice at all (that's called sin!)

- Are we in a place where we think a relationship with Jesus seems impossible, Jesus is gone and we can't find him?
- Or are we in a place where we are so overwhelmed by situations in our lives that we don't recognize Jesus or realize he is with us?
- Do we recognize the voice of Jesus in the crowd? Do we hear him calling us BY NAME? He is and does call us!

The tomb is empty because Jesus conquered death! He is with us and will never leave us! When we hear him call us by name, our response is YES! LORD! There is nothing he wants more than to have a personal intimate relationship with each and every one of us, that's why he went to the cross for us, for eternal life and that we would have abundant and overflowing life here on earth. Jesus is calling, He's calling you by name right now. This is Good news, too good for us to keep to ourselves!

JESUS IS ALIVE! HALLELUJAH! PRAISE HIS NAME!

Happy Easter!

Song: Christ the Lord is Risen Today (Charles Wesley)

Christ the Lord is Risen Today – Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say – Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high – Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens and earth reply - Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led – Alleluia!
Foll'wing our exalted head – Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise – Alleluia!
Ours the CROSS the GRAVE the SKIES – Alleluia!

Benediction:

From darkness and despair, we find hope and joy.
Christ is risen! We go forth in joy!
From doubt and betrayal, we find trust and faith
Christ is risen! We go forth in faith!
From suffering and death, we find healing and life.
Christ is risen! We go forth to live!
Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed
ALLELUIA!