

"King for More Than a Day"
First Presbyterian Church of Kissimmee, Florida
Dr. Frank Allen, Pastor
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KING FOR A DAY

When I was just a kid and home for the summer, we had nothing better to do than watch daytime TV. One of the shows that was popular "way back when" was a show entitled "Queen for a Day." Those were the days when it was considered bad form for women to work outside the home. So there were many housewives sitting at home feeling unappreciated and wishing for a life that was more interesting than the one they had.

Queen for a Day took advantage of that audience. For one day an ordinary housewife was showered with gifts and attention. But, the gifts lasted for only one day. I always wondered what it was like for those women who had experienced being a "queen for a day," and then had to face the routine grind of day to day housework. It must have been quite a letdown.

Today's lesson might be entitled "King for a Day." In our Scripture for today, we learn that for one day Jesus received the reception due a king. But, even as the cheering and the crowds increased, Jesus knew that the glory wouldn't last very long. Yes, he would be their king, but not the kind of king they had expected.

TWO PARADES

One of the more thought provoking moments from Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," occurs when Christ is on the way to Golgotha amid the extreme abuse of the soldiers and the jeers of the crowd. There is a flashback to the scene just a week before when Christ made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. In that scene the Scripture for today is reenacted with people cheering Jesus and waving palm branches as he enters the city.

I think that's a good connection. The march into Jerusalem amid the cheers and the march out of Jerusalem amid the jeers are one and the same. They are both a parade for a king. The first march represents the kind of salvation the people wanted, an earthly king who would create an uprising and rid them of the hated Romans. The second parade represented the kind of salvation they needed, a heavenly king who would forgive their sins even as they crucified the very Son of God.

The first parade made Jesus king for a day. The second parade made Jesus king for eternity. The first parade was about an earthly kingdom. The second parade was about a spiritual kingdom.

That's why everyone had such a hard time understanding Jesus. Things spiritual were a luxury they couldn't afford. The only kings they knew about were earthly kings who reigned by the power of chariot and spear. In the rough and tumble politics of the ancient world, no one had the luxury of speculating about what was really true and good. In their world expedience ruled.

Then, as now, successful politicians mastered the art of threat and deception to control the crowd. They found out what the people wanted and feared and then used those needs to control their every move. There is no loyalty in that kind of world. Yesterday's hero is today's goat. Then, as now, the crowd was fickle, always asking, "What have you done for me lately?" Today they are cheering for Jesus. Next week they will be cheering for Barabbas.

THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM

But, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus cause us to call into question the assumptions of standard politics. Suppose the people who think they're in charge aren't really in charge at all? Suppose all the chariots or Hum-Vs in the world are not enough to really bring about stability and peace?

It's still true you know. Peace will not be found in the sword or the missile or the jet plane. Peace will be found in the sacrifice and the service and the grace of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Remember that song we used to sing at summer camp? "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's just something about that name. Kings and kingdoms will all pass away. There's just something about that name."

What is it about the name of Jesus that outlasts all other kings and kingdoms? It is a commitment to bringing about change by peaceable means. He is not the king who rides on a war horse or chariot. He is the king who rides on a donkey.

THE VICTORIOUS KING

In order to really understand this passage, you have to know about two key Old Testament passages. The first is Psalm 118. This is a song of thanksgiving which was sung as the king returned to the Jerusalem temple after having been victorious in battle. As the king would approach the temple, the worshippers would form a kind of impromptu parade around him singing "Hosanna," which means "save us." All the while the crowd would be waving branches, wild with joy.

The modern equivalent of this scene is our Fourth of July parade or perhaps the joyful victory parades after World War II ended. While waving flags, people give thanks to God for victory and the blessing of living in a free land. Or maybe a better example might be what happened after September 11. Do you remember all the flag waving that went on during those days? That was a patriotic and a religious display. It was at once a display of nationalistic pride and a plea for Divine intervention in our hour of need. That's precisely what was going on as Jesus made his way into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday long ago.

Now there is nothing wrong with being patriotic and giving thanks for God's deliverance in a time of war. And certainly we can understand the need to lift our country up to God in a time of peril. But, we need to be careful that our patriotic fervor does not cause us to claim too much. God has blessed this country, but that does not mean that the will of America is the will of God.

That is the mistake that the crowd made long ago. They cheered when Jesus made his way into Jerusalem because they believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the divinely empowered general who would drive the Romans out of power. They believed that victory was inevitable, that God was on their side. They equated God and country. And they were profoundly wrong.

Both the Jews and the Romans had good reason to worry about Jesus and his effects on the crowd. Waving those palm fronds was more than a spontaneous gesture of joy. It was a declaration of war. It was open rebellion against the authority of Caesar. Don't be too harsh on the Pharisees when you read that they came to Jesus and asked him to quiet his disciples on this point. The Pharisees knew what they were talking about. This kind of talk and this kind of display was dangerous. It could bring about needless death and torture.

But, for once Jesus didn't quiet his disciples. In fact, Jesus suggested that if his disciples didn't cry out in joy, the Creator of heaven and earth would cause the very stones to cry out and proclaim the message of salvation and victory.

Why didn't Jesus heed the warning of the Pharisees? Why didn't he tell them to be quiet and avoid trouble? Because what the disciples and the crowd said was the divine truth. Jesus was

the one who came in the name of the Lord. Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus was the one who saved. He just didn't save in the way they expected.

The disciples and the crowds and the Pharisees didn't understand the full truth of the salvation that was proclaimed that day. In the same way, there are many devout people who cheer for Jesus today and yet don't fully understand Him.

THE DONKEY

The key to understanding the message of Jesus was, strangely enough, in His mode of transportation. Jesus deliberately chooses a young donkey, a colt for his ride into Jerusalem. His instructions to the disciples were very specific. Jesus told them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here." Luke 19:30 (NRSV)

That brings us to a second Old Testament passage that is crucial for the understanding of this text. According to an Old Testament prophecy in the book of Zechariah (9:9-10), in the future there would be another king who would return from a victory. But, this king would not behave like the kings of old.

Instead of a fist raised in pride, this king would come in humility. Instead of entering town on a chariot or stallion, this king would ride a lowly donkey. Instead of shouting "we're number one" and rubbing salt in the wounds of the vanquished, this king would "command peace to the nations." This king would reach out with the hand of blessing for all people.

The power of this king would not be in the number of legions under his command. The power of this king would be in the fact that he would be called a prince of peace. His power would be the power of love and friendship.

WE'RE THE SAME

Don't blame the folks who made Jesus king for just a day long ago. Don't we do the same thing even today? Don't we make Jesus king for just a day, or more accurately, king for Sunday morning? We say such good things about Jesus, and then we just live how we want the rest of the week. By our actions many of us cheer for Barabbas instead of Jesus when we finally make it to Friday.

In other words, we often make our choices not on the basis of the values of his kingdom but on the basis of what seems good to us at the moment. The crowd was not the only one that was fickle in their love for Jesus. We too are fickle. We too cheer Jesus for what we would like him to be rather than who He really is.

Do you really think that the story would end any differently if Jesus had come in our day instead of several thousand years ago?

Many things have changed, but human nature has not changed. We would cheer his promise of salvation, but we would crucify him for his call to peace and forgiveness.

The Prince of Peace would be seen as "soft on terrorism" and "unrealistic" about the world in which we live. For every one who would follow him, there would be three who would reject him and call for the destruction of His dangerous ideas.

We would once again call for Barabbas and his promise of a kingdom based upon power and might.

But, once again we would find that the more we gain power and the things of this world, the more we cut ourselves off from the blessings that God would give us in Christ Jesus.

SPIRITUAL AMNESIA

We haven't changed and neither has our need for radical deliverance. Yet, we too have forgotten the seriousness of our need.

The Bible tells us that the people cried "Hosanna," or save us and "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" as Jesus entered Jerusalem. But, one commentator said that in Jesus' day that cry had become more or less a part of everyday speech. People welcomed everyone into town during Passover with that cry. No longer was it a way to greet a king and cry for salvation.

Now it was just a way of saying,
"Welcome to Jerusalem. Enjoy the festival. Have a nice day."

It was the equivalent of what we say when someone sneezes. "God bless you," we say. Do we mean anything profound when we say that? No. Just a mild wish for healing. Most of the time the same was true when people cried "Hosanna."

The people had been captive too long to the forces of evil. They had lost their identity and sense of purpose. They had forgotten the salvation that had freed them from slavery long ago. They had forgotten that with God even the most hopeless of situations can be transformed.

But, then as now, Jesus was there to remind them of the true life and the true salvation. Jesus stood as the embodiment of truth and love.

PREPARING FOR THE RIDE INTO JERUSALEM

This holiest of all weeks we will learn the lesson again. Even as the powers of hell break loose, there is more to the story than meets the eye. The strange Messiah who rides on the donkey of peace is stronger than anyone imagines.

The parade toward Calvary will not be the antithesis of the parade which took place a week before. The parade toward Calvary will be the continuation of glory. On that road, the desires of the crowd long ago and the desires of every crowd since will be fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

The word "Hosanna," which means "he saves," will not just be an expression of desire and hope. It will become a reality for the whole world. Jesus will not just be King for a Day. He will be King for eternity.

Let us prepare ourselves to ride into Jerusalem once more. It is a dangerous and fickle place. But, in Jerusalem we will find the Prince of Peace and the Lamb of God. In Jerusalem, the place where all hopes and fears still meet, we will find Jesus. There he will take up a cross for the sins of the world.

ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE

I sometimes think that we should rename this Sunday before Easter. Instead of calling it Palm Sunday, I think we should call it Schizophrenic Sunday. I know. It sounds crazy, but this Sunday has always felt a bit crazy and confusing for me.

It has the festive feel of Easter. The flowers are already in bloom and expectations are already high as we prepare for a celebration of the resurrection. But, Good Friday looms on the horizon as well with its sound of silence and smell of death. As one preacher put it,

“... the only way to get from Palm Sunday to Easter is straight through the darkness in between –shortcutting the pain of this week that stretches before us will only short-circuit the power on the other side. Trying to get from the peak of Palm Sunday to the peak of Easter without descending into the valley of death will not work.” (Kate Penfield in the sermon, “Doing and Dying”)

Many of us grew up watching ABC’s Wide World of Sports every Saturday. The program always began the same way, “Spanning the globe to bring you the thrill of victory ...” And then there would be various scenes of athletes experiencing the thrill of victory ... and the agony of defeat.”

The next scene was one which many of us will never forget. It was a video of man going off a ski jump. But, at the last moment he seemed to lose his nerve and tried to pull back. Bad mistake. His tumble off the edge of that jump seemed to last forever.

This is the way I picture the disciples on Palm Sunday. They’re on the top of the ski jump, on top of the world in a manner of speaking. And they have no awareness of how devastatingly swift the descent will be.

I identify with those first disciples and their big fall from grace. This is how it often is for me, flying high one moment, thinking that I understand God’s will, only to find myself alienated, fearful and alone the next. What I thought was a house built of faithful bricks turns out to be a house built of faithless cards.

This is the truth for all of us. We all live somewhere between Palm Sunday and Good Friday, somewhere between the top and bottom of life. One thing is certain. Once the action starts, pulling back will not be an option.

I heard an interview with the man who took such a terrible tumble on the Wide World of Sports. Amazingly enough he wasn’t seriously injured by that terrible fall. And, amazingly, we who follow Christ will find that at the end of life’s free fall we will find safety and salvation as well. We will learn that what the Bible says is true. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

The way to salvation leads through the valley of the shadow of death. We cannot pull back. Instead, we must face that giant hill with courage and hope. No glib Hosannas will do for us. We need to cry “Lord save us” with a sense of urgency because our need is great.

That cry will not go unheeded. The Son of God comes again in clouds of glory. May we embrace his peace and his kingdom. The cry of the crowd long ago is still true. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Amen.

Amen.

"Jesus Come to Us"

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DO NOT CLING

Today I want us to focus on some words that the risen Christ spoke to Mary in the garden. When she recognized him, the Scriptures tell us that she cried out “teacher,” and we assume that she attempted to touch him or grab him, perhaps holding onto his feet as portrayed in so many portraits.

Jesus replied to Mary's action by saying, "Do not hold on to me." We could also translate this phrase, "Do not cling to me."

I think those words from the risen Christ are not only for Mary but also for us as well. We want to hold on to Jesus. We want to cling to him. We want to remember him as he was long ago. But, just as it was for Mary so it is for us as well. We cannot just cling to the Jesus of history. We must have the courage to move on and go where his Spirit leads.

That journey is always difficult because it is never what we expect. It is much easier to cling to our Lord instead of going where our Lord leads. But, the message of Easter tells us that clinging to the risen Lord is not possible.

The tomb is empty. He has risen. And that means everything has changed, not just for Mary and the disciples. Everything has changed for us as well.

LORD OF THE FUTURE

In other words, the resurrection of Jesus teaches us that He is Lord of the future as well as Lord of the past. It teaches us that there is always more to God's will than we can imagine.

Faith is a journey, which takes us beyond the tomb of broken dreams. Faith is a journey, which compels us to leave behind the past and proclaim a future hope that is too glorious for words. We can only do that if we have the courage to let go and follow.

All of us here this morning are guilty of clinging to Jesus. Or, to be more precise, we are guilty of clinging to a particular vision of Jesus. We want to be assured that our way is completely right. We want to manage Jesus and control what he says. We want Jesus on "our side" in our moral, political and religious conflicts.

But, it doesn't work that way. The tomb is empty and so are our delusions of control. The Spirit of Christ is alive and well in our world. And just as he was controversial and disturbing in what he had to say long ago, so Jesus is controversial and disturbing in where his Spirit leads us today.

We want a Jesus who reassures and consoles us. And Jesus does do that. But, Jesus leads us beyond reassurance and consolation. Jesus leads us back into the world with the good news that even though we often deny and betray him, He is still at work in the world. Jesus continues to offer us the hope of forgiveness and new life.

Jesus invites us to quit clinging, to let go and move forward to the next place where the power of the gospel message will unfold.

THE RESURRECTION

Peter Jennings had a special on ABC last week entitled something like "Peter and Paul, The Word and the Witness." In that special they were discussing the resurrection of Jesus.

One scholar rejected the resurrection completely. His view? Things like that just don't happen.

But, another scholar had a different view. She said something like, "As a historian, I cannot account for the facts without saying that something miraculous happened. There were those who claimed to be the Messiah before and after Jesus."

And when those Messiahs were killed, one of two things happened to their disciples. Their disciples either quit the movement so they didn't experience the same fate as their fallen leader, or they transferred their allegiance to another Messiah who seemed to offer more hope for success.

But, in the case of Jesus, neither of those things happened. The disciples of Jesus not only remained faithful to their fallen Master, they also, at great personal risk, continued to proclaim not only the message of Jesus but also their belief that Jesus had risen from the dead."

She hedged her bets as a historian after this by saying, "Now I'm not saying that this means Jesus was resurrected. I wasn't there. I don't know. But, I am saying that something happened."

I, as a believer, can say to you this morning that resurrection is exactly what happened long ago. Jesus is risen. He is alive, and as our choral call to worship put it this morning, he is alive "now and forever more."

The power of the resurrection tells us that the Spirit of Christ is with us here and now. His Spirit is not just a fond memory or a set of moral principles. His Spirit is a living presence who comes into our hearts and lives and that changes everything.

SEARCHING FOR JESUS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

We cannot come to Jesus by searching for him at the tomb. The tomb is empty. There is nothing to see.

This past week I watched yet another special on the Shroud of Turin. Though carbon dating suggests that the shroud is yet another forgery from the 1300s, there was a whole program on PBS devoted to the idea that perhaps it could be the shroud of Christ after all.

Some said that the scrap of cloth analyzed was contaminated which affected the carbon dating and that other clues suggested that it really was a cloth from the time of Christ.

Have you ever wondered why some people are so interested in relics? I think it is because they want to cling to something concrete. If they can't have Jesus, at least they can cling to a scrap of his burial cloth or a sliver of his cross or whatever.

But, whether a relic is authentic or not really doesn't matter. I think that Jesus would not want us to spend too much time and effort thinking about relics. I think that we Jesus would not want us to cling to relics for the same reason that He did not want Mary to try and hold on to His earthly life.

Clinging is a sin that promotes a strange kind of idolatry. Clinging turns a faith about the future into a faith about the past. When we cling, we worship the trappings of faith to the exclusion of the heart of faith.

We cannot "find" Jesus in some archeological dig or scholarly study. Nor can we find Jesus in going to church or reading the Bible.

Now, of course, all of these things can be good. I have nothing against archeology, scholarly study, going to church, and reading the Bible. I encourage all those things. But, we will not find Jesus in those things any more than the early disciples could find Jesus at the empty tomb.

JESUS FINDS US

Jesus is a living presence. We don't find Jesus. Jesus finds us. Jesus comes to us as he came to Mary long ago.

The power of the resurrection always has been and always will be the power of lives totally changed by the Spirit of the risen Christ. Changed lives are, at least in my mind, the most convincing evidence of the resurrection. Not only were those first disciples changed by what they experienced, but people down through the ages have been changed by their encounters with the risen Christ.

There are people in this very room who have had their lives totally changed by an encounter with the risen Christ. Their morals have changed, their interests have changed and their goals in life have changed.

HOPE THAT WILL NOT BE BURIED

As I look back on my own life, I can see that at key moments the Spirit of Christ gently encouraged me to quit clinging to the old ways and risk being open to a different kind of future. Always it was a bit frightening and a bit exciting at the same time.

One thing I know. I have never regretted releasing the old way of life in order to embrace the new.

But, I can only say that as I look back. As I look forward, it is more difficult to see where God is leading. The challenges and changes of this day are always daunting and uncertain. I am never quite sure what God in Christ would have me do and be.

And so I must let go. I must allow faith to shape my life instead of fear. I must not cling to life. I must allow the call of Christ to give my life meaning. I must cultivate a kind of radical openness. I must believe that even a stone covered tomb is not too great an obstacle for the awesome God who is revealed in Jesus Christ.

This allows us to have hope in the most hopeless of situations. This allows us to have a joy that overcomes the pain of the world.

Clifton Kirpatrick, the stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly wrote in his Easter message to the church,
"One of the places where I have witnessed most keenly the realities of Lent and Easter is Sudan. I have never been in a place, before or since, where the suffering is greater. People were starving then, as they are today. Thousands are needlessly dying from easily treatable diseases in our part of the world. Wars seem to have no hope of ending.

In the midst of the unexplainable suffering, I will never forget the witness of one of the elders in the Presbyterian Church in Lar, a small village that had ballooned in size as it was overcome by thousands of internal refugees.

To my surprise, the elder greeted me by telling me that, in spite of the extreme suffering, the hearts of all those in the church in Lar were filled with joy because of the resurrection of Christ and the promise from the apostle Paul that they experienced as true:

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate

us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:37-39).

Our friends in Sudan have it right! The love of God that we experience in the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is the most powerful thing in the entire world. It is this reality that gives us the strength to overcome the evil and travail of the world and to live as people of faith, hope, and love.”

WEEPING OUTSIDE THE TOMB

I must confess that often my faith is not as strong as the faith of my African brothers and sisters who experience many more difficulties than I have ever faced. I am discouraged, as each week I face what seems like an expanding list of those who are seriously ill.

I am overwhelmed, as the news always seems to be bad. I am frustrated, as political and religious leaders both on a national and local level seem content to “fiddle as Rome burns.”

I know that many of you share my frustration and discouragement. Like Mary we sit outside the tomb weeping bitter tears for what we have lost. But, our Scripture for today tells us that Spirit of the risen Christ will not be killed so easily.

We must quit clinging to our old way of thinking. Yes, we grieve because there are many things in our world to grieve about. But, we must not (as the apostle Paul put it) grieve as those who have not hope. (1 Thessalonians 4:13) We do have hope. We have hope for a new heaven and a new earth. We have hope for a salvation that comes from the most unlikely of places.

Hope came for Mary in the form of a person that she assumed was the gardener. This “gardener” asked Mary, “Why are you crying?” And Mary, consumed with grief and tears filling her eyes, pleads with this man to show her what she wants to see, the body of Jesus.

But, the gardener shows her more than she could ever hope to see. The gardener reveals to her his identity. He calls her name, “Mary.” And, at that point, she sees not a gardener but the risen Jesus.

She wants to cling to the familiar friend that she had known these past few years. But, now Jesus is more than she can know or understand. She cannot hold on to him. Holding on is not a part of God’s plan.

Going on to tell others the good news of the risen Christ is a part of His plan. And what happens after she does that is a story that continues to amaze and bewilder even to this day.

RESURRECTION AND NOT AN EMPTY TOMB

When you think about it, the empty tomb is nothing more than a question mark. There are many explanations for an empty tomb. Why wasn’t the body of Jesus in the tomb? Grave robbers? The gardener misplaced the body? The disciples stole the body and contended that Jesus rose? The speculation down through the years has pretty much covered all the possibilities.

But, Christians have always contended that the empty tomb never was the point. The resurrection is the one event in Jesus’ life that no one saw. It was just between Jesus and God. By the time the disciples made their way to the tomb, the action was over.

John and Peter didn’t stay very long at the tomb because they knew that it was true. He wasn’t there. There was nothing to see.

But, soon enough they would see the truth for themselves, and frightened, discouraged disciples would be changed forever.

You see, the tomb was not big enough to contain Jesus. His message and ministry were about much more than just the resuscitation of a corpse. His message and ministry were about the resurrection of a world.

Barbara Brown Taylor wrote, "The risen one had people to see and things to do. The living one's business was among the living, to whom he appeared not once but four more times in the Gospel of John. Every time he came to his friends they became stronger, wiser, kinder, more daring. Every time he came to them, they became more like him.

Those appearances cinch the resurrection for me, not what happened in the tomb.... Easter began the moment the gardener said; 'Mary!' and she knew who he was. That is where the miracle happened and goes on happening—not in the tomb but in the encounter with the living Lord."

THE NEVER ENDING STORY

A while back there was a movie entitled "The Never Ending Story." I'm not sure now what that movie was about, but it seems to me that would be a good title for the gospel of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Following Jesus is a never ending story. Following Jesus is a never ending process of losing him the moment we think that we have him captured. And yet, in our loss we discover him anew in an even more unexpected form.

The Spirit of Christ is greater than any expectation we may have of Him. And when we try to make Jesus conform to our expectations, it is as if we trying to get him back in the tomb where we can come to see him and control him.

But, now as then, Jesus just won't stay put. Jesus is too big for the tomb, and Jesus is too big for our expectations.

Do you long for something or someone? Do you beg God to give you something back that you have lost? Many of the things we long for most deeply are dead and gone. And Easter won't change that.

But, Easter can show us a way out of the darkness. Jesus tells us to quit clinging to the past. That will only lead to more pain and sorrow. The way out of the darkness is found on the road which moves ahead. And the only person who can lead us on that road is the Savior.

This is not the old Savior who leads us, the old Rabbouni we once new. He is just one more thing that we have to leave behind. The Savior who leads us ahead is the risen Christ, a more complete vision of God's power.

He is the One who has risen. Mark this well. He has not risen out of our conquests and joys. He has risen out of our disappointments and defeats. We must never forget that it was his crucifixion which leads to a resurrection.

Until you meet that Savior, you have not understood or experienced Easter.

Most every week we repeat a creed in which we affirm that we believe in the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead.

But, after a while it becomes easy to just mouth the words without thinking about the reality behind the words. We hang on to the truth without thinking about the implications of the truth.

And soon it becomes an easy thing to bend our doctrines to support the darkness in which we reside.

Before long our talk of resurrection is nothing more than sentimental claims about the "spirit" of Easter or some vague notion about "new beginnings."

But, God in Christ loves us too much to just allow us to wallow in our self-absorbed sentimentality. God in Christ will not allow us to hang on to vaguely conceived false hopes.

Today he tells you and me as he told Mary long ago, "Quit clinging. Quit holding on. Let loose and follow me."

We get the feeling that Mary was never the same after Easter. Neither is anyone who has learned that what matters is not that we be confident in our hold of Jesus, but confident in his hold of us.

After the resurrection, things do not return to normal, not for Mary and not for us. That's the good news of Easter. It is the basic belief on which the Christian community was founded. It is the one fact which changes everything forever.

After seeing a risen Jesus, we see that there is no normal. Now we can't even count on the darkness. All we know for sure is that a risen Savior is on the loose. And he knows our names. Amen.