

“Not the Only One Raised”
Sermon for Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018

SCRIPTURE: John 20:1-18

[This is the Holy Gospel...]

There are some rare folks that have a condition known as “face blindness”. They simply cannot recognize faces. Their brain is not able to function in a way that allows them to recognize facial features in others... sometimes not even their own children! Some of us cannot remember names, but can you imagine not being able to recognize a person well enough to identify them? The best way for us to try to imagine what it would be like is to look at some pictures of faces upside down to see if we can identify them. (Don’t cheat my turning your head around!)

[Show pics first upside down... give a few seconds... then pastor will cue to show the face right side up...any order is ok Taylor Swift/Bill Gates/Muhammed Ali/Donald Trump]

Mary Magdalene may have had that experience. In our scripture today, she unexpectedly encounters the risen Jesus... and she doesn’t recognize him!

The Bible tells us that on the first day of the week, Mary went to the tomb—only to discover that the stone had been rolled away! If it was me, I think I would have at least peeked in...

but then the *running* starts!

Mary *runs* to Simon Peter to tell what she has discovered.

Peter and the other disciples go *running* to the tomb to see for themselves.

The other disciple even *outran* Peter...

But for all the running, scripture says that Simon Peter and the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Sometimes, the empty tomb doesn’t change people very much.

But Mary did not leave.

Jesus is standing there and asks Mary: “Why are you crying?”

And Mary, thinking he was the gardener, replies: “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

This is one of the tenderest exchanges between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

“Tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” (Like she will carry him!)

Jesus says: “Mary”.

And then she recognized him. When he called her name, she recognized the Lord.

Even now, it is hard to understand how Mary could have failed to recognize Jesus. Sometimes, our pre-conceptions can blind us.

She thought she was going to his tomb. She was not expecting to see him alive. Maybe that is why she didn’t or couldn’t recognize him.

Maybe we do not always recognize the Spirit of Jesus at work in our midst, when what he is asking of us is so different from what we expect... or think... or want. Or maybe the truth is that when resurrection happens, everything is changed!

When a seed is buried deep in the ground and comes back to life, it is changed. It is not a seed anymore, but something new and different.

When resurrection happens, everything is changed... lives change, churches change, relationships change, priorities change...

When resurrection happens, things don't look the same as they did before.

On this Easter Sunday, we come to celebrate the good news that "Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!" Death did not have the last answer. When sin and evil had done their worst, God did his best and Jesus was raised from the dead. That is the truth of Easter and resurrection. But it is not the only truth.

Resurrection is about more than just what happened TO Jesus.

Resurrection is also about what happens THROUGH Jesus.

When resurrection happens, Jesus is not the only one raised. Jesus is not the only one changed! When we make Jesus Lord of our lives and believe that God raised him from the dead, then we too are raised and we are changed.

We should be different... others should hardly recognize us!

Do people see a change in you because you are one of Jesus' disciples?

Does your family see a change in you? Your co-workers or friends?

Or do we come to church on Sunday, but look like the same old Fred on Monday?

"Oh, there's old Fred. I hear he's been going to church and met Jesus.

But he still looks and acts the same to me. He's still a grump!"

Or does your encounter with Jesus and the power of resurrection change you so much that others go "face blind"... they hardly even recognize you?

What happened on that Easter Sunday was not just about Jesus.

"Oh, there's old Fred. I hear he's been going to church and he met Jesus.

I can't believe the change in him...

a new attitude...

a new spirit about him...

a joy.

Why I hardly recognize him!"

Let us pray.

[to hymn "Now the Green Blade Riseth"]