

SERMON:

Waiting in hopeful possibility

Mary has much to teach us this morning. Ben read in the call to worship about being completely present to this moment, this being the hard work of patience, of waiting. Mary, and even Albert, model this way of being for us. Let's learn from Mary. I'm focusing on the second half of our passage, after the racing of the disciples, the hurried look, and their leaving.

We find Mary standing by the tomb, weeping. She stays in place. She ran away early in the morning to alert the disciples. This time she stays. What is Mary waiting for?

Mary waits.

In our children's story Albert, too, waited. He stood still, believing, hoping, that new life would be born out of the sticks and grass that he held in his hand.

Waiting in hopeful possibility. My sermon could also have been named "Stop, Look, Go", after the work of Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast.¹ Those are the three steps of gratitude, of seeing God alive in the world, at work all around us. That's resurrection.

I want to learn from Mary this morning, using this framework of Stop, Look, Go, as a way of seeing the resurrected Christ alive and at work in the world around us.

Step 1 - Stop.

Mary stops, she stands. Stopping, or standing is about stepping away from the movement of the world and our minds. Many of us have been forced to slow down, maybe even stop these past weeks. If nothing else, stopping our regular routines. In order to truly notice what's happening around us, to find the resurrected Christ within us, we need to stop.

Like Mary, We wait. We stand still, and we feel what is here. For Mary, it's grief. There has been so much grief around us this week - the loss of Rogers, the deaths of

¹ <https://onbeing.org/programs/david-steindl-rast-how-to-be-grateful-in-every-moment/>

thousands throughout our land, the grief of learning that all of our schools are closed for the rest of the year. Mary stood still and wept. Grief literally poured out of her. Maybe grief is what you stop and notice, maybe it's fear, wondering how long this lasts, maybe anger. Whatever is here, in this moment, we stop and notice.

Step 1 is to Stop, step 2 to Look.

To look means to assess and behold the situation in front of you. What is the possibility here?

Our scripture says "As Mary wept" ...while still immersed in her grief, she becomes curious, something in her wants to know more, to see the empty space again, and when she looks she sees something new, unexpected.

"Why are you weeping" ask the messengers dressed in white. Mary names her grief, she speaks it aloud. All she wants is Jesus' body to care for. She's not waiting in hopeful expectation of resurrection. She simply wants to care for Jesus' dead body.

Mary stops, she is present, waiting, watching, eyes open.

Mary looks, with curiosity, she names her grief and asks questions, believing the stranger outside with her to be the gardener.

It's when she hears her name that her grief, her longing, turn to hope-filled possibility.

"Mary"

Mary. She looks again. What does she see? Rabbouni is here with her. Teacher, friend, companion, Lord. Mary looks and sees - Not a lifeless body to prepare for burial, but one who calls her by name. Mary looks and sees the Lord - sees God at work in the world.

Step 1, Stop. Step 2, Look. Step 3, Go.

The Risen one says 'go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." '

Rabboni, the Christ, says: Have hope - let your grief transform to hope-filled possibility. Go, stand here no longer, looking for something that doesn't exist. Go Mary, go and share this good news - the possibility of something unimagined. Go and tell the others that you have seen God at work in the world. You have seen the risen Christ.

Mary stops, she looks, she goes.

She doesn't know what comes next, but she goes forth in the dawn of the morning, on that first day of the week, and announces "I have seen the Lord".

What does it mean for us to Stop. Look. Go? To wait in hopeful possibility? To see the resurrected Christ at work in the world?

We stop. We stay home. We wash our hands, not out of fear, but out of love.

We look out to those who suffer - from loneliness, from insecurity, from unwanted change. We look for God at work in the world around us - in the blooming of the trees, the chirping of the birds, the chalk drawings of our children, the songs offered by one another. Christ is indeed risen, here among us.

Honestly, I'm not sure what it means to Go at this moment in time. On any other Easter we might have plans to go visit family, to go share in celebration with others. Today most of us won't go anywhere. Some of us might spend the day alone. Perhaps we don't go, maybe we stop and look, stop and look, stop and look. Stop and notice what's happening with in us and around us, and look for signs, listen for our name being called. Sometimes that's as much as I can do. Listen hard, hoping to Christ shows up. Maybe we find small ways to go. We go into our lives - into the uncertainty, into the need or the loneliness; into the beauty and abundance of this life. For we cannot Go where God is not.

Let's learn, with Mary, with Albert, to Stop, to Look and then, in any way that makes sense to you, Go. For Christ is here among us. Go in hopeful possibility, knowing that in the bulb there is a flower waiting to be born, in the egg, the possibility of feathers that will fly through the storm, singing.

My friends, Stop, Look, Go - find the living Christ here, calling your name.