

Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? 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.' Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

SERMON:

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

The angels - those messengers, go on ***“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.”***

The women - they remembered his words - not just an ‘oh yeah, he said that’ - this kind of remembering is an internalizing of understanding - “Oh, yeah... this is what he meant!”

What I love about the Easter story is the uncertainty, fear, the amazement, how unclear it is... Jesus first companions, they get it, but they don’t. They understand, deeply, and then seem to forget. It happens over and over in this gospel we’ve been working our way through.

That matches my faith journey. There’s something here, and all these years later I still have a hard time putting it into words. I tend to show up, like the women at the tomb. Like Peter who runs to the tomb, seeking *something*. Wanting to find *something*.

The women showed up at the tomb that morning dragging heavy bags of spices to anoint a dead body.

They were looking for the past.

The angels told them the past, it’s the past. Look in the present. Look around you. Look inside yourself. Remember.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus told his followers what was coming - again and again we got glimpses that

The Jesus story doesn’t end in crucifixion. It ends with *life*. Life unburied. Life rising. You can bury the truth, but you can’t keep it there.

Easter is the remembering, the celebrating - the Creating of life out of death.

God is life, and Jesus, Resurrection, embodies new life for us.

You can bury the truth, but you can’t keep it there.

I need to hear that Good News today - **You can bury the truth, but you can’t keep it there.**

We live in a time when books are being pulled from library shelves.

When people are being disappeared, buried alive in prisons in other lands.

We live in a time when fear runs rampant. Fear that is being used to keep us quiet.

We need to remember:

The Jesus story doesn't end in crucifixion. It ends with *life*. Life unburied. Life rising. You can bury the truth, but you can't keep it there. Reverend Cameron Trimble wrote those words in an article entitled "When all else fails, bring snacks"¹.

In it she writes: "We don't resist authoritarianism with perfection. We resist with songs. With casseroles. With stubborn joy. We resist by refusing to let despair have the last word. She says the secret is to remember - it's not your solo that changes the world—it's the harmony we make together".

Just as the women were prompted by the angelic visitors to remember what Jesus had told them - over and over he told them: expect this. Death is coming. But it won't have the last word. Expect new life. Don't expect the old life to come back, look for new life.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

You can bury the truth, but you can't keep it there.

What's being buried today, in your life, in this fragile, resilient, magnificent world of ours?

In 1964, at the age of 20, Carlos Alberto Christo, a Brazilian journalism student, entered the Catholic priesthood, later becoming known as Frei Betto.

He worked to improve education for those living in the countryside; to feed the hungry. Frei Betto helped create communities practicing liberation theology - these groups combined biblical reading with a debate on the political and social reality they were experiencing. He was arrested for taking part in the struggle to re-democratize Brazil, spending 4 years in prison.

For Betto, the question at the heart of the gospel is about how we enter into Jesus' shared suffering. His ministry centers on the belief that A resurrected people enter into life with those suffer.

His belief is that God so loved the world that he sent his son, not to set the world to rights but *to be* one of us; not to rule the world but to suffer at the hands of the unjust and to suffer out of love,²

Frei Betto knew that you can bury the truth, but you can't keep it there. He continues to work, decades later, for a justice rooted in Christ's presence among the people.

Jesus lived as one of us; came not to set the world right, but to BE one of us - not to rule the world, but to show us what it is to join in the work of love.

1

https://www.pilotingfaith.org/p/when-all-else-fails-bring-snacks?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=58642&post_id=160372758&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=ane5n&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email

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https://melissaflorerbixler.substack.com/p/empty-tomb-absent-christ-and-kilmar?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=890296&post_id=161672234&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=ane5n&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email

That work may be buried, but never dies.

In all the jumbled uncertainty of what I know, what I believe, what I doubt about the gospel story - I know deep within me, that somehow this story doesn't end with death. It ends with life. Life unburied. Life rising.

Take a moment - consider: What's being buried today, in your life, in this fragile, resilient, magnificent world of ours?

What fears lead you to see death instead of the possibility of life?

Your fears, my fears - they may be real. Likely, they need attention, care. We, like Frei Betto, need to join the risen Christ in the work of justice. - and, as we are present to our fears, we

need to hold onto these Easter truths -

The Jesus story doesn't end in crucifixion. It ends with *life*. Life unburied. Life rising.

Easter is about creating life out of death.

What is the life giving task you're being asked to embody this Easter season?

Jesus embodies new beginnings. Fear being overcome by life rising. The truth rising up from the darkness.

MOVE DOWN

In the past several weeks elders and sponsors heard stories of new members - varied backgrounds and faith journeys. 6 of the 7 folks joining UMC this Sunday and next are from non-Mennonite backgrounds. Some were raised with understandings of what it means to follow Christ that have needed to be broken down, dismantled entirely, in order for something new, lifegiving, to rise up from the rubble.

Like those angels showing up at the tomb in dazzling robes, sometimes we need new faces to help us see what's here. We need new voices to help us remember - really understand - what's happening in us and around us, and what our part is in bringing new life into this broken world.

Rev Trimble says the secret is to remember - it's not your solo that changes the world—it's the harmony we make together.

Saying yes to a faith community - saying yes to being a part of a group of people that are flawed, who easily forget the message of Jesus, who step on each other's toes - it requires us to let certain things die, and to move ahead into the uncertainty of new life, together.

In just a minute you'll be invited to proclaim together our commitment to one another saying:

*When we choose to become members of the church,
we commit ourselves to Christ,
to one another,
and to God's mission of healing and hope.*

And so today - this Sunday where we join the women in showing up perplexed, confused by the horrors of the world - we remember:

Easter is about creating life out of death.

We remember: The Jesus story doesn't end in crucifixion. It ends with *life*. Life unburied. Life rising.

We remember: You can bury the truth, but you can't keep it there.

INVITE new members and their sponsors up front

We welcome those into membership who have wrestled with the questions of membership; questioned what it means to live as a body of many members; sat with this commitment we make to and with one another.

As we welcome Mason and Emily, Sally and Mark, Dave (and next week Jenn and Rob Bies), join me in reading together:

Introduction to church membership #959, VT

*The church is the body of Christ,
created by God,
and sustained by the Spirit.*

*The church embodies Jesus' way of life in the world,
revealing God's reign through words and actions.*

*When we choose to become members of the church,
we commit ourselves to Christ,
to one another,
and to God's mission of healing and hope.*

*When we fall short of this vision,
we commit to turning toward one another with compassion
and to turning toward Christ,
our strength and our guide.*

Questions for those joining UMC:

Do you believe in God, the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer and the Spirit our Sustainer?

Do you commit yourself to Christ's ways and teachings?

Do you commit yourself to this body of believers by giving and receiving counsel in the congregation?

Are you ready to participate in the mission of the church?

Baptism of Dave Beppler:

In our membership discussions together, Dave spoke of his baptism as an infant. He has decided to claim baptism as an adult believer. And so, in line with Anabaptist teachings – while the decision to follow Jesus and receive baptism is personal, it is not private.

The living faith of the individual is expressed in the context of the community.

And so today we celebrate Dave's commitment to Christ and the church through baptism.

Dave Beppler speaks of the Holy Spirit *being* the people. We **are** the Spirit when we live in ways that align with Jesus' message of love.

INVITE DAVE TO KNEEL (hand Ken towel)

BAPTISM:

Pray with me:

Creator God, we thank you for your covenant with your people throughout the ages;
through the Red Sea waters you led them to freedom.

In the waters of the Jordan Jesus was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Through the deep waters of death Jesus fulfilled his baptism and was raised to be Lord of all.

Indeed, it is Christ who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

(Lift water vessel)

We thank you, Holy One, for your love of all creation,

especially for your gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.

We thank you that through the waters of baptism you renew us by your Spirit

and raise us to new life.

And now, Dave,

I baptize you in the name of God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, and the Spirit who Sustains.

Dave-

May the blessing of God be yours.

May the Spirit bless you with hope poured out like water and flowing as the river.

May Jesus bless you with discomfort at injustice and oppression.

May the God of Creation journey with you now and forever.

God says to you, "you are my beloved, Be blessed this day and always."

Dave, may you rise up, made new by the waters of baptism.

(To the congregation:) Stand now and join me in welcoming these siblings into the fellowship of UMC by joining me in this reading:

Congregational 'Welcoming of New Members' (VT #961)

Leader: We have witnessed your commitment to Christ
and we recognize you, Sally, Mark, Mason, Emily and Dave as part of this congregation.

**All: We welcome you with joy
as companions on the journey of Faith.
We commit ourselves
to fellowship and worship,
service and witness,
as partners in God's mission.
We receive you as Christ has received us.**

MOVE INTO BRINGING FLOWERS UP TO THE CROSS.

invite new members/sponsors to put in first flowers