

Shout with the Stones!
MCA Easter Sunrise Sermon
Rev. Jennifer Gingras
April 1, 2018

John 20:1-18

Easter morning, and we are here to rejoice and sing and maybe even raise our voices a bit above the accepted level. We are ready to celebrate resurrection!

But it was a far different scene for the disciples, the friends and family of Jesus, on that first silent, bleak Easter morning. Nothing had turned out the way they expected. Up to the very end, they had hoped and prayed that somehow Jesus would be spared the horrible death on the cross. Somehow, someone would come to rescue him. There would be some reprieve, some last moment pardon, some band of angels come to his aid.

But there was no rescue, no pardon. Jesus is gone. The whole world is silent, so silent that one could hear a pin drop.

Mary goes before daybreak to the garden. She is sobbing, grieving, unable to sleep, and seeking the solace of the quiet garden. She remembers his words, those he spoke as he was entering into Jerusalem... "If you silence my disciples, the stones will cry out" (Lk 19:40).

She remembers what he said as she approaches the tomb to find the stone rolled away. It is just as he said... it is the stone that shouts, in its rolling away, that Christ is risen. It is the stone that cries out the good news of the Gospel: that resurrection cannot be stopped.

Easter is so much more than we expect. All the disciples expected from that tragic week was that Jesus would be rescued. But Jesus is not rescued from the pain and suffering of the Cross, nor spared the agony of death nor the silence of the tomb. Instead, God brings resurrection, new life.

Jesus is risen. Death is overcome. The stone shouts the message. You can't stop resurrection from happening, for Jesus. You can't stop resurrection from happening, to us. There is nothing in our lives which can keep God from bringing resurrection.

Think about it. When we face death or difficulty or pain, all we want is to be rescued. We dream of the thundering hooves of one who will save us, and we pray to be rescued. Instead, God comes, not with thundering hooves, but

with the sound of stones shouting, rolling back the gravestones of our lives to bring resurrection.

Resurrection is far different from rescue. Rescue is simply being free from the struggle, being rid of whatever it is that troubles us or bothers us. But resurrection is more than that. It is new life, a life that is lived differently, with a new kind of aliveness toward God.

Sometimes in the process of resurrection we are rescued. But, sometimes, just as on that first Easter morning, God will bring resurrection without rescue. The promise of the Easter story is for each one of us. God will not necessarily come to rescue us from our tombs, but to roll away the stones and to bring us out from those dark places.

There are so many things which entomb us. Loneliness. Painful childhood memories of abuse. A relationship gone sour. Addiction. Fear. Disease. Gun Violence. Anxiety. Workaholism. Whatever the tomb in which we live, the stones shout out today: You can't stop resurrection. God will bring resurrection, a new life alive to God, to you. To me.

But the Easter story does not end there in our personal lives and with our personal resurrection stories, however wonderful they are. What Easter means is that we are to be people who go out from here today and start rolling some stones. The stones will shout. Resurrection cannot be stopped. Let us be the ones, like Mary, who hear the words of the Risen Christ, and get out there to help roll away the stones, to bring God's resurrection to our world.

There are so many tombs in our society, in our world... tombs with human beings in them, who wait in the silence. Let us be people who search them out. Let us be a people who do what we can to roll away the stones. Resurrection cannot be stopped.

Easter began in silence. Thank God it doesn't end that way. It's the day of resurrection! So shout it out loud. Shout it with the stones. Resurrection cannot be stopped! *Amen.*