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***“The Adventure of a Lifetime”***

Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia

Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

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**Holy Scriptures: John 20: 1-18 Acts 10: 34-43**

John 20: 1-18 -- *The Resurrection of Jesus*

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.

*Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Acts 10: 34-43 -- *Gentiles Hear the Good News*

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to

him. <sup>36</sup> You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ— he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

### ***The Adventure of a Lifetime***

Whether in person or over FaceTime,  
as we gathered around the bedside of my mother-in-law Nancy Smith Brewer  
in her last days on this blue planet spinning in the sky,  
Nancy shared,  
*“I am on an adventure!  
I don’t know what’s next or what’s beyond,  
but my adventure will continue.”*

Someone in our circle said, *“Oh, Nancy, you are going to see all the people you love  
who already passed on!”*  
*“I’m not sure there are going to be people waiting for me on the other side,”* said Nancy.  
*“I trust whatever happens is going to be an adventure.”*

She paused.  
*“I woke up in the middle of the night and wondered about seeing souls.  
Because if there were people on the other side, people to see,”* she mused,  
*“whom would I want to see?”*  
*“So, I made a list.  
Started listing family members, friends, mentors,  
and when it got pretty long, I thought,  
I guess I should put Jesus on the list.”*

### ***The Adventure of a Lifetime***

We are on adventures,  
adventures in life,  
thanks to the help of God,  
and adventures to continue in life everlasting,  
thanks to the grace of God.

An adventure is a venturing into the future,  
our feet and minds grounded in the here and now,  
grounded where our bodies are,  
keeping our focus on what and who and why we are here.  
At the same time,  
we venture forth  
with our vision on a hope-filled future with God and one another,  
eagerly looking forward,  
anticipating new experiences, relationships,  
renewal, and yes, resurrection.

### ***The Adventure of a Lifetime***

In this morning's scripture from the Gospel of John  
we witness what happened  
right after Jesus rose from the dead into new life.  
That first Easter morning dawned  
with the enlightening truth  
that everything is different,  
every holy relationship is brand new,  
everyone is blessed  
thanks to what God made happen  
and continues to make happen.

Recently my mother Elizabeth "Buffy" Stuart Calvert visited with a good friend,  
a friend who was quite ill.  
Buffy's friend was in the stage we like to call negotiating with God.  
She was preparing to transition from this life into the next adventure.  
As the two women sat and talked and prayed,  
they discussed favorite passages of Scripture.  
Buffy's friend lifted up the story of Mary Magdalene,  
so named because she was from the town of Magdala.  
They reflected on when she was standing outside an empty tomb,  
meeting the Risen Christ,  
whom she initially mistook to be the gardener,  
until Jesus said her name, "Mary!"  
and she recognized Him.  
She and He recognized each other because they had a relationship.  
Faith begins and grows and evolves  
through our relationship with God and Christ's community of faith.  
Buffy returned home after their visit and wrote a poem,  
a poem lifting up this sacred, special passage of the resurrection event.

MOURNER: MARY MAGDALEN (John 20:1-18)

By: Elizabeth Stuart Calvert

*Crack of dawn, still dark, first day of the week,  
I go up to Jesus' tomb.  
No stone across it. No body inside!  
In shock, I run to tell Peter and John.  
They check it out, go back shaking their heads.  
Peering in, I can't stop crying.*

*Two men sitting there  
Ask me, "What's the matter, gal? Why you crying?"  
"They've stolen my Lord. I don't know where he is!"*

*Another guy's outside. Gardner, probably.  
He asks, "What's up? Why the tears? Who's missing?"  
"Oh, sir! If you've taken him away, tell me. I'll look after him."  
"Mary"*

*It's Jesus!  
"Teacher!" I reach up, but he says tenderly, "Don't cling, Mary.  
Tell my brothers  
I'm going to my father and your father,  
To my God and your God."  
I run. I shout,  
"He's alive! I've seen him!"*

### ***The Adventure of a Lifetime***

After hearing Jesus say her name,  
we can well imagine Mary Magdalene in her grief and relief  
reaching out to hug, to hold, to cling to her beloved mentor and Messiah.  
Jesus Christ says, "Do not hold on to me..." "Do not cling..."

He speaks of the physical and the metaphysical.  
Please don't hug me, for I am about to ascend to our Creator.  
And please do not hold onto a past that cannot be again.  
Prepare yourself to move forward, to see a new future.

Jesus taught Mary and us that our...

"...faith is not a continuation of the warm familiarity with the earthly Jesus  
that had been enjoyed by..." Mary Magdalene, the disciples  
and the good people of Palestine.

Faith is trusting.

Trusting in the risen Christ,

“generated in the power of the Holy Spirit,  
[to] lead [us] into the “greater works”

[we] have to do in the world in the name of the Living Christ.”

“Christian faith is not holding on to a past

that recedes ever farther into the distance...

[Christian faith is all about] experiencing a living present

in which everything is different, [new and renewing],

because of what once really happened and continues to happen.”

(Craddock and Boring, P. 357)

The Prophet Isaiah said that God says:

*Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.*

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

*I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.            Isaiah 43*

Here is the new thing!

God is alive, at work in the world, yesterday, today,  
and for the tomorrows to come.

Therefore we are not to cling nor hold onto the past.

Memories are good and precious.

Grief is good, for it helps us to remember.

Remember, give thanks, and remain grounded

where your body and people are, in the here and now,  
venturing into the community to serve

and to love your neighbor as yourself,  
going forth with confidence

that the Lord provides,

provides a future adventure, a future lifetime.

### ***The Adventure of a Lifetime***

Lillie Sapp shared a little story on Good Friday.

Lillie said a mom took her young daughter

to an Easter sale at the department store.

Afterward the mom asked her what she thought of the Easter sale.

“That wasn’t an Easter sale.”

“Why not?”

“No tombs!”

We stand with Mary and Jesus at the empty tomb and give thanks.

We give thanks that our last breath on earth

is followed immediately by our first breath in heaven.

The Good News, my friends, is that if the amazing grace of God is true,

then death does not get the privilege of the last word.  
If the amazing grace of God is true,  
then whatever binds or holds us back or down or apart is overcome by love.  
If the amazing grace of God is true,  
then all will be saved.

On this blessed day in this holy space  
our presence and prayers proclaim the joy-filled Truth:  
Your mother who passed away *lives again*.  
Your grandmother who passed away *lives again*.  
Likewise, your father who died *lives again*.  
Your son, your daughter, your sister, your brother  
whose burial you witnessed *lives again*.  
Your beloved kinfolks, your friends, your neighbors near and far,  
and the great cloud of witnesses who have gone on before us *live again*.

### ***The Adventure of a Lifetime***

You know, we should not arrive at death's door all prim and proper  
in a pretty and well-preserved body.  
Instead we ought to arrive breathlessly,  
skidding broadside through the pearly gates,  
thoroughly used up, totally worn out,  
and loudly proclaiming, "*Wow! What a ride!*"

***All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!***