

Good News for All
Resurrection People #2
Luke 24:1-12

Good Morning Church Family. It's good to be together this morning, and welcome to those of you who are joining us online.

Today is, of course, Mother's Day. I'll confess that this day snuck up on me, in the busy-ness of life lately. And when I was planning our current series on what it means to be and live as People of the Resurrection, I didn't include Mother's Day in my sermon outline. How providential then that today's message does, in fact, focus on women, some of whom were mothers, and their role in proclaiming the gospel.

In the text that Ed read for us this morning, we find the women heading to the tomb of Jesus to anoint him with the burial spices that they had prepared. Women, throughout history, were the one's present at birth and death, the ones who embodied existence led them to the thin places in life-where first and last breaths were taken. The women were walking through the early first light of day to the tomb, and in the distance, something didn't look right. The outline of the tomb is different than when they left it, a day and half. Hoping it's a trick of the light they quicken their pace, and as the women come closer to the tomb, their stomach's drop, the feeling in their fingers disappears. The stone is

moved, the entrance to the tomb open. They walk in, fearful of what they might find- the body moved? Unwrapped? Desecrated? Worse-the body of their Lord is gone. Taken? What will they do now? Dizzy with fearful questions they suddenly realize they are not alone- two men in dazzling clothes are standing beside them. Overcome by shock and fear the women drop to the ground, faces down. One of the men says in a voice of kind, curiosity, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here-He is Risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and crucified and on the third day rise again." At those words realization dawns for the woman- the dead body has not been taken, stolen- there is no more dead body! Jesus has come back to life! Joy and delight and relief fills them up as they look teary eyed at one another-Jesus is alive!

And so they dash away from the tomb, running through the streets, wind against their faces to tell the others- to "tell the 11 disciples and all the rest." Verses 10-12 of Chapter 24: "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." "These words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." These women who had served Jesus alongside these men, who had been present at his death, who had helped to lay his body in the tomb were not believed.

Throughout the past and the present, women have been viewed as unreliable witnesses. Jewish rabbinic tradition lumped women together with gamblers, and other seemingly unscrupulous people in terms of their credibility. Deena Kopyto, in her academic article, *Women's Testimony and Talmudic Reading* said this, "Why would tractate Rosh Hashanah mention women along with these groups of people? Among all of these categories, one thing that connects them is their supposed dishonesty. Perhaps women were seen as deceitful, which is why they cannot be trusted to testify in court. The conception of women as untrustworthy is one that runs throughout history in various societies. Since Eve, women have often been portrayed as crafty tricksters, fooling innocent men. Christian theology especially promulgated this idea, as it often portrayed women as seductive and deceiving. They based this conception partially on the Christian interpretation of the Adam and Eve story, in which Eve is the main deceiver in the story, not the snake. This idea even extended to the idea of women being witches, fooling men with their powers and lies. Perhaps the Jewish ban in the courts was a precursor to the Christian view, and simply reflected popular sentiment that women could not be trusted, along with gamblers and usurers."

While women, at least here in Canada, have equal protection under the law, the echos of women as unreliable, as deceptive, as not fit for certain roles or positions still persist in subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways.

So, why? Why did God entrust women as the very first bearers of the gospel? As the ones who would first share the good news that Jesus is risen? We know that God works

in all sorts of times and places and cultures, but surely God could have orchestrated the events of that Sunday morning differently? Would the Gospel have seemed more believable if it had been James and John at the tomb? These are all worthy questions, and I don't think that the woman being the first witness to the resurrection is a coincidence, a happenstance in the biblical story. The women witnesses were a sign of the new Kingdom that Jesus was birthing on that Sunday morning.

Let's think back to the story of Jesus' own birth, the story of Advent. Who were the first non-family recipients of the news that the savior had finally come? The shepherds. Working class people. And the Angel of the Lord said to them, "But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, **I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people:**"

I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for ALL THE PEOPLE. All the people. Most especially, the people who have been left behind, excluded, deemed unimportant or unreliable. Just the arrival of the infant Jesus brought the declaration of good news of great joy for all people, so the resurrection of Jesus now calls ALL THE PEOPLE, -the woman at the tomb, you, me, all of us, to declare the good news of great joy.

Feeling unqualified? Don't worry; you're in good company. Evangelizing, testifying, telling the stories of God at work can be really hard, particularly in this time and place in Canada. The co-opting of words like "Evangelical" or "Witnessing" by the Religious Right

in the US has left a sour taste in the mouth of the gospel. Yet, there is also a desire, I think, in the greater Mennonite Church to reclaim the practice of witnessing. This summer's MC Canada national gathering is about this topic- We Declare What we have seen and heard. As resurrection people, we affirm that the gospel (both the telling and the receiving) belongs to us all.

One of the most beautiful images in the Bible about God entrusting us with telling God's story to the world is found in 2 Corinthians 4:5-11, " For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you." We're like fragile clay jars, tentative, easily broken, but filled with the life of Jesus. We are the vessels that God chose to carry the good news of the Risen Jesus around in.

In the Spirit of declaration friends, I'd like to share with you a piece of more story of how

I found my footing as a proclaimer of the gospel. What I'm about to share is an article that I wrote back in 2018, before I was a pastor, when the kids were little. See attached article, "Saying Yes"

<https://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/M251-3-summach.pdf>

Amen.