

Easter Sunrise – 2009
LSB #457
Text – John 20:13-14

They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, & I do not know where they have laid him.” Having said this, she turned around & saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

HIDDEN RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES

I know you’ve been there because I have. The answer is right in front of you but for some crazy reason you can’t see it. It happens to people when they’re taking exams. It happens when we’re trying to solve problems. It happens in our personal relationships. So it doesn’t hurt to take a good hard look at ourselves from time to time, & this should get us started.

During a trip to the mental hospital, a visitor asked the Director what criteria was used to determine whether or not a patient should be institutionalized. “It’s simple,” said the Director, “we fill a bathtub with water & then we offer to the patient - a teaspoon, a teacup, or a bucket. Then we ask the patient to empty the bathtub.”

I get it, said the visitor. A normal person would use the bucket because it’s larger than the spoon or the teacup. “Well... no.” said the Director. “A normal person would pull the plug. Would you like a bed near a window?” *PAUSE*

How would you describe “normal?” In a situation where the answer is right in front of your eyes, but you still don’t see it, how do you react? Do you feel stupid? Are you embarrassed? Do you try & pretend like you knew all along?

A member of one of my churches in North Dakota was in a mental hospital & while visiting her, she told me about one of her roommates. They’d been having a discussion & this roommate got upset because the member of my church told her,

“You’re not normal.” Of course, this member of my church didn’t believe that anyone was normal.

Do you realize she’s right? How else would you explain the phenomenon described above, where something is right in front of your eyes & you can’t see it? If that’s ever happened to any of you, then you are not normal, because something went wrong. Normal is usually defined as a situation where things go as expected. If someone you know is right in front of your eyes you should recognize them.

As children of God, if sin is right in front of our eyes we should recognize it, but it’s our very sinful nature that ends up blinding us to it. God’s pronouncement, on the 6th day of creation, that everything He had made was very good, came before sin entered our world. Nothing, & no one, has been normal since the Fall.

Yet all of us are guilty, not just of failing to see the sins we are guilty of. We’re also responsible for failing to see Jesus as He is at work in every aspect of our daily lives. He promises to be with us always, to the very end of the age, but our anxiety proves we don’t trust His promise. Our impatience proves we don’t trust His promise.

Our hearts long for the eternal things, because God has placed a sense of eternity within us. We create all kinds of problems as we search for the fulfillment of that longing in all the wrong places. We focus the majority of our attention on the physical things of life, homes, possessions, careers, as if they’re going to provide eternal security.

But they’re here today, gone tomorrow. Even Mary, searching for Jesus at the tomb of His burial, was looking in the wrong place. When she finally recognizes Him she wants to physically hold on to Him. She will have to learn to hold on to Jesus

spiritually, even when she cannot see Him, though each day, He will be hidden right in front of her eyes.

Jesus will be hidden in all the blessings we receive each day, that seem to us as small & insignificant so that we easily take them for granted. If we can still breathe, Jesus is hidden right in front of our eyes, as life giving oxygen passes into our lungs & throughout our bloodstream. If the neurons in our brain are still passing information back & forth, billions of times a minute, Jesus is hidden right in front of our eyes. Take any single person that you've hurt with your sins. If they've forgiven you, & found healing, Jesus is probably hidden there, right in front of your eyes. And in that hiddenness of Christ, all of us experience a type of death.

Mary was looking for her Lord's body on Easter morning & when she didn't find it tears came. Jesus was already risen, but without knowing or believing or comprehending that, Mary was inconsolable. She was mistaken, but inconsolable, nonetheless. In our struggles, in our sorrows, in our grieving, we too often fail to see Jesus though He's right in front of our eyes.

Are there times when you suffer in this life? Sure! Are there times that doubts grab your heart & won't let go? Certainly! Have you known grief & grieving? Have impossible decisions been part of your journey? Has a sense of guilt ever soured your will to live? Then you already know the many small types of death that we experience in this broken world.

You, like all the rest of us, need an Easter morning in your life. You need to see Jesus as He stands right in front of your eyes. That's why the Apostle Paul wrote, "We live by faith, not by sight."

We love to indulge our five senses, & marketing people get wealthy in dreaming up new ways to convince us to indulge ourselves, richer chocolate, creamier ice cream, hotter sex, indulgence is everywhere in the media. If you don't have it, then you need to get it. But living by faith doesn't involve any of our five senses. It involves believing what we do not see.

The truth is: nothing is more REAL than that the Christian has already died to sin & been raised to a new life in Christ. But that reality is hidden to our fallen mind, our fallen spirit & our fallen senses. In this life it will always be that way. So Paul wrote, "We live by faith, not by sight." It's only when Mary encounters the resurrected Jesus that she comprehends the new life she's been given. Not even the angels could make Jesus known to her, but as Jesus speaks her name she 'sees.' Then she becomes a faithful messenger. Jesus allowed Mary's tears. He allowed her grief. He allowed Mary to think He was still dead & that His body had been taken away. He allowed these things for a time so that Mary would take to heart living by faith.

When you can't find comfort, Jesus is still there. When we can't find peace, Jesus is STILL there. When we are torn by the tragedies of life, Jesus is still there. He's allowing our suffering for a time so that we learn to live by faith. It takes practice. It takes experience. The journey itself is the goal as we are shaped & molded by the trials of life to be more like Jesus.

All people claim to see God in the triumphant times of life, the success, the joy, the achievement. True Christians also find Jesus in sorrow, suffering & tribulation, because at those times our hearts are tender & it is then that our faith truly sees.

Creamier ice cream & hotter sex might make this life more pleasurable, but they rarely help you see Jesus.

Mary was suffering as she came looking for her Lord. When He calls her name she finally recognizes Him. Your Lord & Savior is calling your name, right now. He has been calling your name ever since your Baptism. When you come to the Lord's Supper, He's calling your name. When you hear the Word of God, He's calling your name.

With every breath you take, Yahweh is calling your name. With every beat of your heart, our heavenly Father is calling your name. In every struggle, in every sorrow, in every grief, Jesus, who knows them all, is calling your name. Physically, He may be hidden right in front of your eyes, yet by faith you can see. Amen.

Jesus Christ is risen today, our triumphant holy day, who did once upon the cross, suffer to redeem our loss. But the pains which He endured, our salvation have procured; now above the sky He's king, where the angels ever sing. Alleluia! Amen.