**From The Tomb has Come . . . Life in its fullness**

**Welcome**

**Reading Luke 22:47 – 23:56a**

**The World as It is**

*This is a story that Captures the depths of human suffering. It captures the deepest wounds that humans can experience. (Betrayal, Denial, Abandonment, False accusation/inability to defend one’s self(powerlessness), abuse of power, mocking/shame, injustice, our choosing of violence over love, torture, violence, loss (Women/Mary).*

It is quite remarkable that this story, of the death of a Galilean peasant, has been told again and again, for now close to 2000 thousand years. And that it still is resonates with us. It is still the subject of great works of art and it continues to inspire great pieces of music music. Or watch our movies, how often do they retell this story, whether it is in the latest superman movie or in the Matrix or how many other movies.

Why does this story matter? Why do even secular musicians and directors go back to this story to inspire their art? It is because it is our story. The power of scripture is often found when we ask the question, what story our we living out? Or when we read a story what parts of the story, what character, are we? What parts of this story capture a part of our soul?

One of the central teachings of Christianity is that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. This means that Jesus reveals not just who God is, but who we are and who we are intended to be. In scripture we are revealed, not just by the person of Jesus but by all of the characters in scripture and how they react or are touched, healed or frightened by God. This is the challenge that scripture presents us with. Because we usually would prefer to hide.

You can hear it in how this story happens at night, under the cover of darkness. We live most of our life wanting to cover over both our shadows and our suffering. Do you know the struggles that your neighbors are having? During an earlier phase of this down turn we had an interesting phenomena happening on the street I live on. One day our neighbor would be living by us, and everything seemed fine. They had nice cars a nice lawn. Then suddenly they were gone. We even missed the moving vans, and then we would see the note on the door that the house had been for closed on. This was quietly happening all over Calgary, I am sure it is happening again.

The church is often quite guilty of this. Just think about when you come to church. How many people there really know what is going on in your life, how many people know your story? Of course we could also ask, do you really know your story? Are you really open with your self to the suffering of your own life? Most of us live, hiding from our own shadow, covering over the deep pain that rests in the recesses of our hearts. Most of us live, with a degree of blindness to the suffering that is in our community and our world.

Jesus, messes this all up. No wonder that they crucified him? No wonder that the church has gutted him and made him all blond and nice? No wonder so many avoid him. Yet this story is told.

When we hear this story what we hear is a litany of human suffering. What are the deepest wounds, the deepest hurts that a human can experience. What are the primary wounds that many of us carry in the depths of our heart that often drive our emotions and behaviors. Are they not the wounds of betrayal, of abandonment and denial, are they not the wounds of justice denied, and abuse where someone has abused their positions of power and trust to hurt us and take advantage of us, are they not the scars that violence leaves, that shame leaves, along with death and loss.

This is precisely the story of Jesus. Is he not betrayed by Judas, one of his closest friends? Is he not abandoned by disciples, those who have lived with him, learned from him and been healed by him? Peter, the so called Rock, denies even knowing him, not once but three times. The he is handed over. It is precisely the religious leaders, the ones who are supposte to represent God who set out to have God killed. Pilot know that he is innocent, yet he has him not just abused but tortured. Then justice is denied. Jesus is sacrificed to appease the mob. Crucifixion, the whole process of being wiped and lead through the streets, all of it was designed as a public spectical of shame and mocking. Which even one of the criminals, dying besides him, joins in with. Then there is the violence of the crucifixion. We think of the cross as something special, but what we need to know is that it was in fact ordinary. Pilot was famous for having lined the roads with the crucified bodies of thousands. Crucifixion represents how ordinary and common violence is, yes even in our communities and homes. Then Jesus dies. Can you imagine what it would have been like for Mary, Jesus’ mother to stand there and watch this all. Her own son, flesh of her flesh, her little baby, being tortured and being killed to appease the mob of her own people. Her loss and grief I can not even imagine.

All of this, are things that we experience. All of these things, betrayal, abandonment, abuse, shame, loss, violence and injustice. This is what we experience as humans, and when we do it is deeply impinted on our hearts and soul.

We are also though the charctors who inflict this. Have we not all been at some point Judas, and betrayed the trust someone had given us? Have we not all been the disciples and ran away from a person or situation that was to frightening for us or too difficult. Have we not all been the religious leaders, sacrificint one person, trying to get rid of someone who disturbs our community and our comfort? How many of us have abused the power that is given to us, and hurt someone, or shamed someone. How often have the communities that we are apart of done the same thing. For if we are apart of a community that does such things, and say nothing, do nothing to stop it, then we are also responsible.

The story of the crucifixion is our story.

*Calling us to not cover up but expose the brokenness of the world. Confession. Not beating our selves down, but rather naming things as they are. Honesty (Image of going to a doctor, can’t heal what you don’t tell them about) What drives us here, getting to know our own motivation, also our own calling.*

This is where the spiritual journey beings. It begins with confession. Confession is not about beating our self up. I am not asking anyone to flog there self or wear a hair shirt. Rather the heart of confession is simple honesty. Can we be honest about our suffering, can we be hones also about how we inflict suffering? Can we dare to bring what is hidden out into the open. Why is this important?

It is not about beating us down or airing our dirty laundry in public. Rather it is like going to the doctor. If you want to be healed, if you are suffering, how useful is it to go to the doctor and say everything is fine. No if you want the right diagnosis, the right medicine or treatment, if you want to find healing, we all need to begin the hard work of confession, of humility of seeing clearly the condition of our life and our world, just as it is. It is also this honest that will help us identify the desires that will lead us into wholeness.

***Personal Reflection:***

*1 )What are the pressures in your life, challenges, suffering.* – I would like you to begin by closing your eyes. And reflect for your self. Where is there suffering in your life, what are the pressures or challenges you face? Where are you causing suffering? What is broken? What desires burn in your heart unfulfilled? How is the story of the crucifixion your story?

*2) What are some of our social challenges, who is being crucified in our world?* Now I would like you to reflect on our community and our world what are some of the challenges that your community faces, that our province that our world faces? Where is there suffering?

*One on One*

1. *What are some of the pressures, suffering, challenges of your life.* You don’t need to share your darkest secretes, but simply what are some of the pressures or suffering that you and your family faces?

*Small Group*

1. *What are some of our social challenges, where is the crucifixion happening in our world?*

*Song*

**Our Response**

The question now is how do we respond? What do we do with this suffering and pain?

*The Response of Peter – using our power/violence to change things*

One response is the response that Peter takes. The soldiers come to take Jesus and he pulls out his sword. When we face violence when we face suffering, our first reaction is to pull out our sword and respond to violence with violence.

Now by violence I don’t just mean physical violence. How many of you have ever experienced someone who is emotionally violent? Or someone who through social structures and process, through gossip and rumors, or what ever power they have, commit violence? Who take their revenge and exert their will. This is called power over. It is violent because it seeks revenge and to destroy, to harm and beat down.

We have all done this, both to others and two our selves. It is amazing how much violence people inflict on them selves. How we beat our selves down.

What does violence do? It usually just inflict more suffering, it usually just invites the others to respond with violence. How often does it work to bring real change. It is very telling who Peter actually strikes with his sword. The slave of the high priest. Someone who is basically a victim and not the source of what Peter wants to strike out against. Who normally suffers from violence, usually the innocent while the guilty walk away from the fight. After all what chance would Peter on his own have against a detachment of soldiers. Not much. When we boil with anger and resentment within us, what impact does this really have on those we despise? What impact does it have on us.

*The Response of the women from Galilee and Joseph – quietly clean up*

Then there is the response of the women from Galilee, women along the road and Joseph. They know the power structures. They know that they can’t win. So what do they do. They weap, they morn, they accept that they can’t change anything so all they can do is watch and cry as Jesus is crucified. All they can do is to burry the body and prepare it for burial.

How often to we live as defeated people. We wail, we cry, we burry the dead and accept our defeat. Depression, anxiety if often simply our anger turned inwards, the accpeptance that we can do nothing, that we are nothing. There is no greater epidemic in our world then these things. Depression and anxiety are rampant and uncontrolled. If everything is so good why are so many on the latest version of prosaic?

*Leads us to the Tomb – as an end.*

The response of violence is to believe that it is all up to us to make things right. The response of crying and wailing is to believe that we can do nothing. Both lead only to one place. The tomb. To death and the end. Both have the fallacy that it is all about us. When we are the center, when our life is only a human story and about human power. Even when it is wrapped in therapeutic language and slickly sold, if it is just about us, we enter into the world’s darkness and our tombs alone.

If we go into our tomb on our own what is it. It is simply a place of death, of decay, and loss. On our own the tomb is simly the end.

If Jesus was just human, if he went there on his own, then his story like our story is over. Full of sound and furry, signifying nothing. One more gallileen peasant, in an unending history, defeated and slaughtered by Rome.

**Another Way**

**Reading Luke 22:39 -48** – Yet not my will but yours be done.

*Heart of a contemplative response – Turning in prayer to God’s presence and action*

Of course Jesus’s story dosen’t end with a silent tomb filled only with a rotting body. His followers are not left weeping. Even the power of Rome, the worst that Rome can do is defeated. To understand though how this unfolds, how we get to resurrection, we need to begin with what was left out when we first read this story. We need to begin with the very intension that launched Jesus toward resurrection. The story of Jesus does not begin with the betrayal, it actually begins with prayer.

The story of the passion and resurrection begins with Jesus, praying with his disciples on the Mount of Olives with his disciples. While he is there he prays, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.”

Jesus does not want to die. That is clear, but at the same time he gives his consent to God, and he utters what is the most important, the most profound, phrase if we are to understand what contemplative prayer, and the process that leads us to contemplation is all about.

“Not my will but yours be done”

What do we need to do so that we may enter enteral life. It is an ancient question. What must we do so that we know God? That we might be transformed, that we might find wholeness or holiness. There is only one things, one very difficult thing. It is to consent, conscent to God presence and action in your life.

God is a God of profound love. God is a God who yearns to heal us, to heal our world to again unite us with God and restore us to what our lives were intended to be about. I like to picture this as a great river, a river of God’s love and healing just freely poured out flowing down a mountain. The only problem is that a great damn has been erected between us and this river of love. And we stand on the other side of this damn, thirsty, yearning for water.

Who has built this damn? Well we have! Us as individuals and us as humanity. We built it because we have thought throughout our life that we can make it on our own. We can grow our own crops with water we make. We have built elaborate systems of pipes, from religious structures, to work, to success to, to nurturing hurts, to relationships, to technological distractions, and wealth. The list can go on. These are the great emotional programs we have created since childhood, since the pre- history of our culture, since before we can remember, to meet our needs and desires. The great irony is that instead of brining us water, we have built up this mass of pipes to the point that it blocks the flow of the river. So that this great river is now like so many rivers these days where so much water has been blocked or taken out of it that only a tricle makes it back to the ocean, back to where we might need it today.

We have built it and now we are afraid, untrusting. We have relied on all these emotional pipes and damns for so long. Can the river feed us? What would happen if we removed a part of the damn would we be overwhelemed? Wiped out? Destroyed? Would the river God be angry for what we have done?

God’s response is simply this. Come and see. There is a simple valve, that will allow this water to begin to flow again. It is conscent, it is to trust me, and allow me to again flow into you and through you. Allow me, even in small ways to again water your soul. When you do, I will begin to wash away all of this that you have built up to contain my love.

“Not my will, but yours be done”

When Lutherans talk about how we are justified by grace, through faith, unto good works. This is what we are actually talking about. Justification is actually about how we are again made one with God. Atonement, at-one-ment is the fancy theological word. Justification is simply about how we become again what God intended us to be- united with God, again reflecting God’s love into the world. How does this happen? It is by grace, by the free flowing of God’s love like how a river freely flows down a mountain side and along the plains, that we are united with God’s love. We don’t need climb up to the clouds to get water, the water flows down to us.

Though faith though means, through trust. Faith is not about believeing the right things. This understanding comes from a modern fallacy where Christianity became about having the right objective knowledge. This isn’t what it has ever really been about. It is about a life giving relationship with God. Faith, is to trust, to trust God so much that we entrust our life to God. Faith is simply just another way of saying consent. What does grace flow through? It is our consent our faith. This is what justifies us, that is this is what again makes us into what God intended us to become.

“Not my will, but yours be done” These words of consent by Jesus are profound because they are what allowed God into to humanity, through Jesus. These words of consent are what turned a brutal crucifixion into the gateway into eternal life for all. These words of consent are what allowed the tomb of Christ to become our womb that births us into life eternal.

*Practice – Choosing a sacred word – as a consenting to God’s Presence and Action. Sitting and returning to the sacred word*

Centering prayer, is probably better called the prayer of consent. In fact in French this is often what it is called I have been told. When we sit to prayer. We begin by simply giving consent to God’s presence and action in our life. Then we sit what you will find is that it doesn’t take long before all of the stuff that makes up your damn that has kept God at bay starts to float up, in what are called in centering prayer thoughts. This is a pretty broad category. Thoughts included everything from the monologues that go through your brain, your to do lists, your regrets, you feelings, bodily sensations even visions of heaven or great insights. What ever it is, that carries you away. When you notice this, you simply return to this conscent, to God’s presence and action in your life.

When do you return to this consent? During your prayer time you will notice that there are lots of thoughts that float by. Some will simply float by like boats on a river. When this happens simply notice them floating by and let them float by. Then there will come along a boat that grabs your attention and soon you will find yourself jumping on board and diving into its hold. When this happens, and you notice this happening you simply, and gently introduce a word that represents you’re your consent, and you return to simply resting in this openness to God. Until the next boat comes that grabs your attention. Then you do it all again and again. Returning again and again to this consent, returning again and again to being open to how God’s grace can begin to be at work in you.

Now consent is rather abstract and hard to work with. So what we do in centering prayer is to have a word, that acts as a symbol of our conscent. What the word is actually doesn’t matter. What matters is what it represents, our consent to God’s presence and action in our life. Often people like to chose a word from scripture. Some people use a short phrase. What ever is chosen, stick with it. It helps no one if you keep changing your word especially during your time of prayer. You don’t want your word becoming itself a distraction.

Some people examples are, faith, love, Jesus, grace, Lord make haste to help me, Maranatha (Comes Lord), Peace,

How do you choose one. Well lets do this. I would like you to simply sit comfortably, feet on the ground and back straight. Breath deeply. Now simply pray to the Holy Spirit that the Spirit lifts up for you a word that can represent for you your consent to Gods’ presence and Action in your life. Now lets sit in silence and allow something to arise.

Lets practice. Lets sit quietly, gently say silently to your self what ever word has arisen to you, then lets sit and as thoughts arise, gently introduce into your mind your word or phrase.

***How This Changes the Story***

*As we sit, the uncovering of our wounds, but joint with grace they become a part of the story of resurrection*

So How does centering prayer work. How does it heal us and transform us. Simply put, it allows God into our life, so that God’s grace can work in our life and flow through us. When this happens our story gets joined to God’s story. Except there is one big difference. Instead of being a story that leads simply to death, it becomes a story that leads us to resurrection and new life. God’s story becomes our story as a pat into life.

As you sit in centering prayer over time. Instead of finding quiet, what you will soon begin to discover is just how noisy your mind and heart is. Unlike may other forms of meditation, you will find that it will often get noiser. So what is going on?

Remember that image of the dam? All of that junk will need to get cleared away. Now if you simply took it all away at once, what would happen? You would get flattened and drowned by the sheer pressure of all that water built up. Thomas Keating once said that, that God’s love for us is so great and so intense that if we were exposed to God’s love in all of its intensity we would be burnt up into a little crisp.

Though it might not always seem like it, God is gentle. As we pray God lifts a part of our damn and says, will you allows me to wash this away in my love?

You see se all have these deep emotional program. These are both eternal and cultural. All of us have been loved imperfectly or we were simply to young, too inexperienced, too unformed, to adequately respond to the love that we have been given. Because of this all of us, from the time we are children, have created patterns of thoughts and actions that we have used to meet our needs. Many of these are not so helpful. Yet they get wired into our neurons, into our patterns of life, into the stories we tell of our self both consciously and unconsciously. Many have even been written into our culture. These ar the things that we ultimately need to be healed of.

Between the pressures of great spiritual practice of life itself and our times of openness and prayer, out will come these programs. We are called to simply hand them over to God, to return to consent again and again.

Now washing them away isn’t perhaps the best way to describe what God does, rather God seems to transform them, open them, heal them and yes some do need to get washed away. Deeper and deeper God slowly works, uncovering more and more of our deepest wounds to be healed.

What happens to Jesus after he conscents. Well out comes all of the deepest, what are often called primary wounds of humanity.

He is betrayed: He is abandoned; he is abused; He suffers violence; Injustice; he experiences loss and grief. The story of the passion is the story of our suffering and how we inflict suffering. IT bring out all of it.

Without Jesus consent to God, without his relationship with God, his being apart of God, it would be just one more horrible story.

Since Jesus consented to God, with his relationship to God, since he is God and a part of God – the story becomes something much more different. All of this horrible things become a part of the story of humanities’ healing. Now it dosen’t make of these things right or good. Our crucifixion of Jesus still remains something that is profoundly wrong, betrayal remains wrong, abandonment, abuse, torture, it is all still very wrong, any theology that tries to denny this, is crap, and has been use far to often to justify abuse. Rather what God does is bring these things into God’s story and God transforms them, God redeems them, instead of a path leading to death, God transforms them into a part of the path leading to eternal life, life in itsfullness.

In Centering prayer, what ever horrible thigns that have happened to you all still remain wrong, but God has the power to transform and transcend them, to bring them into the story of your being made whole. God does this by raising them up and gently saying to you, can you hand this over to me now, will you consent to allowing me into your life, to take these things and turn them into your path of healing and into eternal life.

And we go around this again and again.

*Forgiveness - “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” - Extent of Grace – even a criminal on a cross.*

*Healing – Today you will be with me in paridise*

Why do we need to unearth all of this pain and garbage. One of the great insights that the East hold onto and reminds us of is a teaching of Jesus, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”

What we are doing is the very slow process of purifying our hearts – our hearts being the very core of our being, the place where God dwells in us. Bit by bit our hears are purified, bit by bit our hearts expand, as this happens bit by bit we begin to see God all around us and discover God within us. You will find this happening not just in your times of prayers but throughout your life. When you begin to conscent to God, you will begin to discover how your daily life and your prayer life begin play off of each other. A common experience is that your time of prayer can almost be tortureous, but slowly in the rest of your life you begin to discover God at work.

A our hearts are purified, you will also begin to discover, that a part of the junk you need to clear out is the resentment and pain that you hold because of what others have done to you, or that you have done to yourself.

Life is messy, life is hard, and people are far from perfect, and at times outright evil. What do you do with this? What do you do? This is the path of forgiveness, which is often apart of our contemplative journey. We all have people that we need to forgive. Parents, spouses, former friends, spouces, God our self.

Jesus on the cross cried out, “Forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing” It is quite profound, if we really knew what we were doing, would we ever harm others? If we really knew the consequences of our action, both for ourselves or for others, would we slip so easily into evil? I am suspicious, a lot less often. How often have you done something that has hurt someone else because you just didn’t know or were not capable at the time of acting any better?

Forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.

When something comes up and you realize that you need to forgive someone, set aside some other time to go through a process of forgiveness, and even reconciliation. There might also be other things. Something may come up that you may need counseling, that you may need to rectify, you may need to help others, to make up for past mistakes. The list is long, and it is unique for each person. Centering prayer is a part of the path of healing, and there are other parts you may need to turn to as well. What we are healing though is eternal.

I love it when Jesus says to the criminal on the cross “Today you will be with me in paradise” What an expression of the extend of healing that is possible, there is still hope, still grace, still healing for a criminal in the process of being executed. Paradise for a criminal. This is how full God’s grace is.

This is what we turn to, again and again, as we conscent To God’s presence and action, God’s healing and restoring, to the presence and action of Grace.

**Song**

*Still leads to death – but Father into your hands I commend my spirit - the death of our false self.*

Make no mistake, the journey that this prayer takes us into is still death. Even Jesus dies. This is the hard part of the contemplative journey. The dark night of the soul. Death is still very much a part of it.

Each of us have constructed, what is now often called a false self, it used to be called the sinful self. It is simply who we normally think that we are, along with all the patterns of thoughts, desires, feelings, history, identity, success, failures etc. that we so often use to define who we are.

All of this, is actually quite worthless compared to what God has intended for each of us to become. What is salvation, it is to participate in the very life of the trinity. We are made to have God live in us and through us, to be embrace and filled with God’s love. Compared with this, even a Ferrari looks like a cheap toy. What ever success you might have, what ever suffering you might hold on to, what ever desire might drive you, it is all so small compared to what God intends for us.

To get there, there must be a dieing of this false self so our true self can be born. Expect a struggle. Many, if not most don’t get though it before their actual death. Everything that we think we are will put up a fight. The greater the grace that God intends for you, expect a greater struggle. Even our images of God. Even our desires for consolation, those nice religious feelings, for peace, for comfort. What ever is not of God slowly gets burned away though this continues return to conscent. And sometimes it is hard, sometimes this dryness lasts years, sometimes it is so intense we can barely stand it.

Its hard, but because we are not dying on our own, just as Jesus did not die on his own, but rather in his death turned his spirit over to God, again an act of consent. Death was not the ending, but all of our beginning.

*Leads us to the Tomb of Silence – the place where we encounter God and God acts – Place of Silence, place of waiting, place of Ressurection.*

What is the tomb without God? It is a place of rotting death. With God it becomes the profound gift of silence. This is where contemplative practice slowly leads us. It is into silence.

Silence comes in many forms. Perhaps you will find that you simply don’t need the radio on so often when you drive. Perhaps you will begin to learn how to just sit and enjoy what is around you. You may even find yourself on weeklong silent retreats and enjoying it. There is also a deeper silence.

Sometimes God invites us in to deep interior silence. There will be times when the thoughts begin to slow and stop and you can just be and rest in God. Sometimes God give the gift of being brought into a silence that is beyond all thoughts and images.

When we enter silence, we are beginning to enter into God and to hear the language of God who speaks in silence.

It is amazing what God can do in a moment of deep silence. In such a moment God can begin to open up and plant a seed for a whole new way of being in the world. Books, retreats, speeches, all the noise of religion and spirituality are powerless when compared with the power of one simple and deep moment of silence.

For it is in this silence of the tomb that God births us into eternal life, even in this life.

*Practice – Silence*

**Reading – What does Transformation Look Like**

**John 20 1-18**

*Something is different, God has acted, but it takes a while to figure this out.*

What does resurrection look like? It is interesting. The resurrection has happened. New life, eternal life has become a reality within the world. They don’t get it right away, actually not really for a long time.

I love how Mary thinks it is grave robbers. This is the most logical answer to the empty tomb. This is what makes sense, but it is not what has happened. The resurrection has happened, but the realization of it is just beginning to unfold.

This is what happens to us as well. God begins to bring us into eternal life, to forms us into what God intends us to become. It usually takes a long time before we realize what has been happening. It would be great if God made it clear to us right away. Zap now you are supper apostle. That is not though how it usually works.

*Different Approaches – Mary (Fear) – John (Excitement and Caution) - Peter (Charge right in)*

How do we react. The fun of this story is that these characters capture our usual reactions. May is afraid and she runs and gets John and Peter. So fear. John is excited about what has happened, he comes running, but is cautious, stands back and watches. Then there is Peter who barges right in. Then they return home, they go back to what they know.

*Mary – Remains and weeps (The need to stick with it)*

Mary is our guide for how we can live into what happens to us. She, of all the disciples remain. She ran the first time she came, but she comes back again and she remains and she weeps. She dosen’t even run from her emotions or feeling. She just sticks with it and weeps and Jesus comes to her.

“Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

I think it is fun to see this story from Jesus’ perspective. You have just risen from the dead, You were executed, and now you are alive and guess what the first person you run into is one of your closest friends. You would think that they might be happy to see you. Nope she just stands there and weeps. I can see why Jesus says, so who are you looking for here anyway? Did you expect someone else, was there another funeral I missed.

*It takes a while for us to see God’s presence with us – it is not what we are use to seeing. God Keeps calling.*

Of course Mary is simply living out what we all experience. If we are not expecting something, if we don’t have either the cognitive space or the heart space to see a reality, even if it is right tin front of us, we just can’t see it (Story of Gurrilla).

What is Jesus’ response. He just keeps calling until she can see.

The same is true for us. As you pray, as God brings you inter this gift of life, at first we can’t see anything different, because we are not expecting it. Everything seems ordinary, and we weep. God will keep calling, and calling.

*Then Mary Turns – Conversion – ongoing process of us being called and turned around – This is how we are transformed.*

When it says Mary turned, it should strike you as odd, because she is already talking to this Gardner, which means she is already looking at him. So why does she turn? Well the word here is actually closer to our word to convert. This is Mary’s conversion, the very core of her inner being is turned around. She cries out Rabbouni! She can now see who the resurrected Jesus.

In this short bit, we catch the core of spiritual transformation. God calls, and we are converted. We are turned around from what ever we were focuced on before, what ever was our priorities or vision, and we turn towards God. It is though this turning that we gain sight that can see God.

Of course Mary wants to hang on to Jesus. She doesn’t want to let him go. So Jesus has to ask her to let God.

*Our tendency to hold on, and yet we must let go, even to our experiences of God. We turn to God, but God also turns to us. It is not an end point we hang on to, but a continuing relationship.*

This is the dance we are invited to. Not some end point, but rather into a dynamic and ongoing relationship with God, were we are continuously being turned around by God. So sorry , no, now I have arrive, but rather, God calls and we turn, God calls and we turn. God calls and we are turned out into the world.

*Transformation becomes a part of our calling, not called into passivity, but action – Mary Called the Apostle to the Apostle – (Marry once filled with seven Demons – Becomes the Apostle to the Apostles, the first of the resurrected church)*

Mary is changed by this interaction. She was once Mary who was filled with seven demons to Mary who is now sent to the disciples, making her the apostle to the aposles. She is the first one to tell the goodness of the resurrection, she is the one sent to the ones who will be sent. Apostle to the Apostles.

The transformation that centering prayer calls us to, is not just so that we can bliss out with God. There is work to be done in the world. The story of Easter does not end with the resurrection, but rather continues as the Holy Spirit, that is God’s presence is poured out into the disciples so that they can go out and share God with other.

Mary who was once filled with Seven Demons, becomes Mary filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostle to the apostles. We are not being called to just more work. We are being called to participate in the life of God. We are called to be filled with God’s love, and to live God’s love. Created by God, loved by God, loving with God – in other words, as Paul described it, formed into the image of Christ. This is what salvation is all about, to become a part of the life of the Trinity.

How do we get there. It is by grace. It is a freely given gift of love. The journey is not always easy, but it is loving. We travel this journey by again, and again, returning to faith, returning to consent, to sitting and truning again and again to a little word that expresses our openness to God’s presence and action. It is a process of consent that openness us to becoming how our world is again opened and healed by God’s presence and action.

It is by this process of consent to God’s Grace, that our tombs become our wombs birthing us into eternal life.

**Come and Fill our Hearts with your Peace**

**Day 2.**

***Practice – One place of suffering – where to you hear God’s calling?***

**Easter Leads to Pentecost – Resurrection to us becoming the dwelling place of God, how God’s love continues to be incarnated in the world.**

Acts 2:1-4

To understand the sweep of what Easter is about, we can’t stop at the tomb, we can’t stop at the road to Emmaus or even the assention of Jesus. We have to continue through Pentacost.

At Pentecost the great reversal that is begun by Jesus continues its great turn. At the time of Jesus where did people belive that God dwelled on Earth? It was in the temple, specifically in the Holiest of Hollies, a place that only the male hight priest could enter once a year. A place that was surrounded by layers and layers of exclusion.

What happens at Pentecost, God comes down and dwells in ordinary people. They were all together in one place the text says. The Holy Spirit falls on all of them. Geographically, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit happens, off on a hill away from the temple.

God keeps doing this. Pouring out God’s self not just into us, but all over the place. Not just in the church, but outside of the church.

The gift of contemplative prayer is it prepares us, transforms us, so that we might be a part of this great outpouring. This changes how we work.

*Catching the Bigger Vision*

* *Peter’s Approach – one loosing battle*
* *Galilean Women’s – Unending suffering*
* *Jesus/Marry – 2 billion Christians – (defeated empires, gave hope to how many deaths) Most important draw us into the greater reality of life. – We are eternal spiritual beings, being brought into the life of God.*

Yesterday we wrote up all these challenges of our world. The first question I want to ask is what would be different about these if the kingdom of God was alive amongst us? What is the world God is calling us to?

How do we move from one to the other? How do we address this as Pentecost people, as contemplatives?

*We talked about Peter’s approach – we engage in battle. What would it look like if we addressed these issues like Peter?*

*What would it look like if we approached it like the Galilean women or like Joseph Arimathea or the women in the streets weeping?*

*What would it look like if we approached these things like Mary?*

**Practice**

I would like you to get into your small groups. First of all choose one of these issues that you all care about or that affects all of you. First sit quietly. When you talked about these, what issues seemed to resonate with most people. Talk together and choose one together.

Now sit silently practice centering prayer for just a few minutes. Then listen with your heart? What is at the heart of this issue?

Then go around in the circle, each person taking their turn without interuptions. Simply listen to each other?

Now again sit in silence. How is God at work addressing this already? How is God perhaps calling us to work together? Where does this connect with your passions? Then when you are ready, take turns again.

Is there something you could commit to doing together? Or at least experimenting with together? Trying and watching what happens?

How is our world transformed? It is through transformed people working tougher? How are we truly transformed? When we return again and again in silence, to consent to God’s grace, to Gods’ presence and action in us, and through us.

Amen.