



***“From Repaired to Repairers:  
The Christian Narrative of Brokenness Restored”***

**Rev. Dr. Martin Hall – Preaching**

*Luke 24: 1-12; 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21*

*April 17, 2022 – Easter*

So, we all know the old jokes about how the Midwest has only two seasons – winter and construction! For those of us who live here along the I43 corridor, however, that adage feels particularly true right now. The route between our home in Mequon and the church is all kinds of torn up these days. One of the unique frustrations about these especially large and rolling construction projects, however, is that it begins to feel as though you are constantly having to ask yourself, ‘What am I going to do now?’

- A certain route you travel regularly is blocked by construction, so you ask, ‘What am I going to do now?’
- The route you found to avoid that construction starts up with another project of its own, leading one detour directly into an entirely separate set of obstructions. So, once again, you ask yourself, ‘What am I going to do now?’
- You get up one morning to discover that the now detour from your detour crosses a bridge that they’re going to rip out and replace. ‘What am I going to do now?’

I, of course, could keep going with these. For those of us in this area, it’s very much been our experience of late. And, for those not impacted as much by the current construction, the truth is that it’s really been the defining sensibility of our communal experience for these past two years. Between the evolution of the pandemic, the constantly changing recommendations and restrictions – not to mention the seemingly endless litany of once-in-a-lifetime types of stories that emerge daily in the news – these past few years have been a constant examination and re-examination as we’ve been forced to ask ourselves, again and again and again, ‘What am I going to do now?’ ‘What am I going to do now?’ ‘What am I going to do now?’

What got me thinking about all of that this week, however, is that I think that this was very much the experience of the disciples throughout those events that lead to the empty tomb.

It starts in that room as Jesus gathers and breaks bread with the disciples. He keeps talking about some betrayal and suffering that’s ahead. Confused, they start asking themselves, ‘What are we going to do now?’

- Jesus is arrested and put on trial before the people – who call out for his crucifixion. With angst stirring within, the question arises anew, ‘What are we going to do now?’

- Crowds gather as Jesus is forced to carry his cross to Golgatha, and they watch as he is suspended aside two common criminals. Overwhelmed with sorrow, they wonder, ‘What are we going to do now?’
- Jesus’s body is laid in that empty tomb, the disciples gather in grief and question how to move forward without their teacher and friend, ‘What are we going to do now?’
- Suddenly, at dawn, word starts spreading that the tomb is empty. Afraid, and even more confused, their minds start spinning, ‘What are we going to do now?’

As we approach the empty tomb, however, what I want to suggest is that the tenor of that question begins to evolve.

It’s worth noting that each of the resurrection narratives, that we find in scripture, includes a moment of blindness or doubt to the miracle that was unfolding that morning.

- Matthew’s telling has Jesus gathering with his disciples in the hours and days that followed the resurrection, and he tells us that, while some worshipped Jesus, others doubted.
- Mark tells us that the women who gathered at the tomb remained silent for fear of what might happen.
- In John, we read of how the beloved disciple stopped short at the entry to the tomb (not even entering in), that Thomas refused to believe unless he could touch the wounds on Jesus’ hands and feet, and that Mary stood outside the tomb and looked Jesus right in the eyes, with no clue as to who he was.
- And, in our reading from Luke this morning, he tells us that when the women told the apostles of what had happened, the words, ‘seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.’

Now, to be clear, I don’t begrudge any of them for any of that. There’s no judgment coming from me. I think Thomas, and others who had doubts, get a bad rap for reacting in pretty much the same any one of us would have if we were in that situation. Stuck in that quandary of what they were going to do in the face of the death of Jesus, they couldn’t see beyond that moment of despair to the greater wonder that was unfolding before them. For each, it took a different path for that understanding to evolve. Some just needed a bit of time. For others, they needed to see the empty tomb for themselves. And yes, there were a few who needed to see the risen Christ – even touching his hands with their own – before they could believe. In that moment, however – in that miraculous instant of grasping the wondrous gift of God that had unfolded in their midst – the very same question they’d been asking all that while became something entirely new.

Throughout all of the events that had preceded that moment of understanding, those followers of Jesus were recurrently asking themselves that same question. In confusion, fear, sorrow, pain, grief, worry, angst... the list goes on. Riddled with anguish and strife those believers were constantly forced to ask themselves, ‘What are we going to do now?’ And then again, ‘What are we going to do now?’ In that moment, however, in that instant of clarity about that which had taken place, those words took a whole new form. With anguish replaced by anticipation and strife by celebration, their painful cries of, ‘What are we going to do now?’ were replaced with hope-filled expectancy as they asked themselves, ‘What are we going to do now?’ As the pain and sorrow of their grief and fear was replaced with the wonder and hope of the resurrection,

their questions shifted away from how they were going to make it through the trials that were unfolding and turned to those of how they were going to live out this joy that was blossoming in their hearts.

The answers that followed, then, were in many ways different and yet still the same. Some went back to their homes and communities to tell of the story. Others went forward to new places and circumstances where the tale might be shared. There were those who carried it into lives of preaching and healing – even standing up to the religious and secular institutions that might seek to quell the good news. Even those who had unknowingly come upon the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus left that encounter and began to tell everyone of what had been revealed to them in the breaking of the bread. The pathway to that moment of understanding was different for each to the next, and the manner in which they proceeded from that understanding was equally diverse. What was common in them all, however, was that they went from that place in which they clamored in terror, ‘What am I going to do now?’ and then revealed in the joy of the resurrection as they answered that same question by saying, ‘I’m going to live it out.’ ‘I’m going to share it.’ ‘I’m going to find my ways to take this wonder and joy that I have discovered in the risen Christ and I’m going to make it real for others too!’

Over the course of this Lenten season, we set our sights on the clamoring in our lives, and in the lives of those around us, for the healing that God brings. In many ways, we were focusing on the places in which we and others are asking ourselves, in fear and dismay, ‘What am I going to do now?’ And, throughout the season, we’ve been reminded about the many ways and manners in which God brings healing into those circumstances and into our lives. As we come into this celebration of the greatest and most incomparable healing that God brings into our lives, however – as we rejoice in the glory of the empty tomb – we too are compelled to begin to shift the focus of that question and to ask, in hopeful anticipation, ‘What am I going to do now?’ ‘Now, that I’ve been reminded of the healing that is mine...now that I’ve been grounded in the hope that I know in the risen Christ...now that this miracle is known to me...What am I going to do now?’ And, our answer, I argue, ought to be the same as it was for those who were there that day. ‘I’m going to live it out.’ ‘I’m going to share it.’ ‘I’m going to find my ways to take this wonder and joy that I have discovered in the risen Christ and I’m going to make it real for others too!’

Paul, in his second letter to the church in Corinth, refers to it as the ministry of reconciliation – the work of being ambassadors for Christ. We’ve based this entire season in the words of Isaiah. ‘When you loose the bonds of injustice,’ Isaiah says, ‘when you let the oppressed go free, when you share bread with the hungry, bring the homeless into your house, clothe the naked and satisfy the needs of the afflicted... then you shall be called repairer of the breach.’ Be it the story of those who encountered the risen Christ, the words of Paul from the early church, or those from Isaiah from centuries before, there are countless frames that one could put around this concept, but the story is the same. The Christian narrative is a narrative of brokenness restored. Our brokenness – physical, emotional, psychological, relational, spiritual – our brokenness is restored in and through the work of the risen Christ both then and now. It is in that restored brokenness, however, that our anguished cries of, ‘What am I going to do now,’ become ones of hope-filled expectancy as we ask, ‘What am I going to do now?’ And, the cycle then continues, in and through us, when we answer as did those believers from so long ago. ‘I’m going to live it out.’

‘I’m going to share it.’ ‘I’m going to find my ways to take this wonder and joy that I have discovered in the risen Christ and I’m going to make it real for others too!’

Take a look today, or in the days to come, if you will, at that list of prayers that we’ve named in our order of worship throughout the season – the longing for healing in our lives and in the lives of others, that you shared coming into and through this Lenten season. Then, allow yourself to ask that question anew. Energized by the wonder of God’s glory in the empty tomb – grounded in the hope of the risen Christ – look towards the pain and the sorrow that surrounds and ask yourself, ‘What am I going to do now?’ My hope – my prayer – for each of us, is that our answer might be the same as it was for those believers those many years ago. ‘I’m going to live it out.’ ‘I’m going to share it.’ ‘I’m going to find my ways to take this wonder and joy that I have discovered in the risen Christ and I’m going to make it real for others too!’