

“When Healing Stirs” – Based on Luke 24:1-12  
Aspen Community United Methodist Church  
Easter Sunday - April 4, 2010

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*As United Methodists we consider the story of the resurrection in the same way we approach all important issues and questions. We consider scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.*

They went away amazed.

Let's be amazed with them and with the story they tell.

Surely there is something amazing for us in it.

It is a story to ponder.

When United Methodists ponder important questions –  
theological questions - but actually anything -  
we have a method.

The method is this. We do four things.

Those of you who have been in *United Methodism 101* will know this well.

The first thing we do is consider Scripture. What does it say?

The second leg of this Methodist way of questioning is to consider Tradition.

How has the church related to the issue?

from early Jewish tradition -

to the early followers of Jesus -

to the church of the Roman Empire -

and on through history.

The third leg of this Methodist way of questioning is to consider Reason.

“Does it make sense?”

Reason became important around the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries  
with the development of the scientific method

And the fourth leg of this Methodist way of questioning  
is to think about Experience.

What is my personal experience – or the experience of people I know?

This is the method of the Methodists.



Let's go back to our story of the resurrection of Jesus - as told by Luke.

What does it say?

Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James  
came to the tomb to prepare his body.

The stone was gone.

Jesus' body was not to be seen.

But there were two figures in *dazzling* garments.

The women were terrified.

The figures in the *dazzling* garments reminded them  
that Jesus told them this would happen.

They remembered.

They went away and told the Eleven and others.

The apostles thought the whole thing was nonsense and refused to believe.

Nevertheless, Peter runs to see for himself. He is amazed.



We might ask how this story relates to other parts of scripture.

For example, these men in *dazzling* white might remind us of when  
Jesus took Peter and John and James up on the mountain.  
They watched Jesus in prayer and it seemed like his appearance changed.

His clothes became *dazzling*.

There's that word again.

Moses and Elijah were somehow present.

Moses and Elijah were two of the most significant people in Hebrew history.

Stories connect to other stories and if we study them -  
we get the bigger picture of what the writers were trying to portray.

And that is just a very brief look at Scripture.



The next thing we Methodists want to consider is  
what the years of our Tradition have done with this story.

Being raised from the dead was not an invention of the early Church.

Resurrection was actually an ancient Jewish belief  
and even before that a part of Egyptian thinking.

It was talked about in the Book of Daniel -  
as something everyone would have at some point.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbinic literature tells us even that one rabbi from the early 2nd century -  
did experiments on the tiny thing (coccyx) at the base of the spine.

He thought it was indestructible.<sup>2</sup>

Resurrection was something ancient people already were curious about.

So - hope for resurrection would have been a part of Jesus' learning -  
something he may have believed - or known - was possible.

Wonder what that might mean?



Another way to look at our Tradition -  
is to consider an event like the resurrection as a part of Holy Week -  
to be a very meaningful path for personal growth.

To observe the events of Palm Sunday  
and then the betrayal and the crucifixion  
and the resurrection –  
it is something that has lessons for us  
if we treat it as a time to examine ourselves.

On a very deep level – it's a time  
to consider how we have experienced betrayal -  
a time to think about how we have betrayed others -  
a time to consider forgiveness deep within our hearts -  
a time to let go of the past and enter freely into the future.

Tradition has a lot to say to us – some things are downright shameful.

Others are affirming and life-giving.



The third way we Methodists approach important things  
is through Reason - to ask if something makes sense.

The Methodist method appears – on the surface - to break down here.

There is nothing reasonable about the story of the resurrection -  
as we understand the world.

The only reasonable conclusion  
is that there is more to the world than meets the eye -  
and a lot more to learn.

That is a reasonable conclusion.

There you have it with Reason in relation to the resurrection.



And finally - What about experience?

This is the fourth leg of our Methodist method.

We were not there.

We don't know anyone who was there –  
or anyone who knew anyone who was – who knew anyone and so on.

But we've had experiences of heightened connection - awareness  
at times – maybe during prayer or meditation or through music.

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We may have had experiences with others doing the work of Jesus.  
Some of us can recall transformative times on volunteer trips to be of service -  
cleaning homes after a hurricane – or building schools or libraries.

Something happens when you do the work of Jesus.

It is one thing to read about it.

But when you are willing to step out of your comfort zone -  
get out of the bubble – so to speak – it’s like you meet Him.

Like the song we sang a few minutes ago -  
we encounter Christ under many guises.

We meet him when we work for justice –  
when we work to free those imprisoned in oppressive environments.

We meet him when we get that tug in our hearts  
telling us it is time to – lift someone up.

You decide to give yourself to the world  
and in doing so you will find meaning like never before.



We know there is something to this Jesus.

We just can’t figure out what it is or how to describe it.

But we step out - trusting life itself – or the ground beneath us –  
to sustain us and grow us.

That would be faith.

You just get this sense that there is another dimension –  
one we don’t quite have a grasp of – except sometimes fleetingly.

I call that the Christ energy.

It is a healing – creatively reconstructing energy.

We use it in our prayer time.

It is experiential.

Perhaps it was a Christ energy that people began to feel.

They called it “the risen Christ.”

That’s one way to consider Experience.

Another way is

if you have encountered resurrection in your own life -  
and experienced its healing effect.

For whatever reasons your life – at some point - turned out to be a total disaster -  
and you lost direction and hope.

When all seemed lost – somewhere along the way –  
a new window into life – you noticed was open –  
and you were welcomed through it.

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About the only explanation you could give was this:  
“Maybe there is something to that resurrection story.”



Religion is not truth. Religion is story wrapped around truth.

If the sacred stories – and that is how I think of the Bible -  
have something really important about resurrection -  
then it must be part of the human experience -  
and we can count on it.



I am calling this message “When Healing Stirs”  
because that may be a clue to how resurrection works in our lives.<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of all kinds of brokenness – healing stirs.  
In the midst of darkness – a light shines.  
In the midst of death – new life appears.



So that’s my take on the story for this morning -  
using Scripture – Tradition – Reason - Experience.  
We’ll never know what happened that day at the tomb.  
But we know something happened.  
It was no ordinary day.

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And the people who knew him the best  
were quite sure they kept knowing him long past that day.



I don't think it is so important whether you believe the story or not.  
The apostles initially thought it was nonsense.

What is important is how it can change your life.  
It's not a matter of history – and it's no longer a matter of belief -  
as it is our reaching for the Spirit –  
and being open to surprise in our own lives.



In a few moments I invite you to take part in The Lord's Supper.

We call it a sacrament because we believe  
it connects us to the mystery we encounter in Jesus.

We do it because Jesus did it  
and because it refreshes us for the journey  
of living more fully in the Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Chilton. *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography*. P. 274 and following

<sup>2</sup> Joshua ben Chananiah

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from a sermon by Rex Hunt entitled “In the Midst of Brokenness, Healing Stirs”