

SERMON FOR EASTER SUNDAY 2013

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i
United Church of Christ

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: **John 20:1-18; Luke 24:1-12 (Focus)**

Message: ***“Jesus is Risen! Re-remembering, New Insights & Fresh Perspectives!”***

Kekapa P.K. Lee



He Qi – “The Empty Tomb”

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Gathering in the Word

Easter gives to us a time of re-remembering!

Remembering reconstitutes and reforms again our relationships that have been sealed or broken off by stones in our lives. Each of the four Gospels brings a unique and distinctive point of view to the story of Easter. In the Gospel of John, the Apostle tells the Easter encounter between Mary Magdalene and the risen Jesus.

Both Luke and John turn our attention to remembrance. Mary doesn't recognize the gardener who is really Jesus. Recognition only comes when Jesus speaks her name—*Mary!*

While John doesn't use the word "remember" in our verses, the memory of that familiar voice speaking her name shatters grief, restores relationship, and empowers her, "I have seen the Lord!" (20:18)

This what re-remembering does for us!

Hearing the Word

Luke 24:1-12 (NIV 2011)

Jesus Has Risen

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.
² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the

women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ”⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

John 20:1-18 (NIV 2011)

The Empty Tomb

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand

from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

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A lot goes on in an Easter Service all over the world and we have witnessed that this morning through our praise team, the brass ensemble, the organ, the combined choirs, the Easter songs—and our children and all of us who have gathered this morning!

Both the Gospels of John and Luke tell the climax and high point in very an understated way: here there's no

predawn earthquakes, no soldiers fainting dead away. There is no description of Jesus emerging from the tomb (apparently no one witnessed that and so no one wrote about it!).

So Mary Magdalene treks and goes to the tomb. She noticed the stone has been moved and, apparently without further checking, assumes that there is something fishy and suspicious going on. Since Jesus had been dead, and since Mary knew what dead looked like and how undeniably—Jesus was dead that Good Friday. So Mary thinks and assumes that someone has taken Jesus body. As a general rule, dead folks don't do a lot for themselves.

Peter and the other disciples make the same conclusion—they didn't think (yet) that Jesus had been raised from the dead. So in John we have this famous scene of Mary Magdalene weeping her eyes out over this latest indignity upon a man she loved. Twice the **Jesus-incognito figure** asked Mary why she is weeping and crying. Jesus knew better than anyone that Mary Magdalene's tears are representative of the tears of all humanity!

This is the weeping, the bitter spilling forth of salty tears—that has enveloped and wrapped the human race for ever-so-long now! Why was Mary weeping and crying? Mary was crying because of what death had done to Jesus body—decay, decomposition—as well as totally defenseless against the whims of those who would abuse a dead body.

Jesus asked Mary twice out of a deep well of both compassion and empathy.

Mary Magdalene on Easter morning is an emblem and sign of the whole human condition. Mary is at once—every single one of us here this morning! And so it is in **that** situation that Easter must burst forth!

- ✓ Easter doesn't happen in a church sanctuary.
- ✓ Easter doesn't happen around a dinner table when we have our family around us and with mountains of delicious food all around!

But:

- ✓ **Easter happens** in the Emergency Room when the doctor comes up to the waiting room and shakes his head, "We couldn't save him/her. Death has come."
- ✓ **Easter happens** in the funeral home when the first glimpse of Dad/or Mom in the coffin hits you like a cinderblock to the chest—you can't breathe!
- ✓ **Easter happens** on the care home nursing floors where once strong-willed men and women watch their peers disappear one-by-one and where all these wheelchair-bound precious people know that all of life has now come down to this long waiting for death.
- ✓ **Easter happens where death is—because that is the only place it is needed!**

So today, Jesus still comes up from behind to ask,

- ✓ Why are you weeping?
- ✓ What are you depressed?

- ✓ Why are you afraid that you, too, will end up in that wheelchair?
- ✓ Why are you so sad?

Every one of those questions has a perfectly logical answer. None of us cry and weep without cause. Mary Magdalene didn't either. **Mary, like each one of us this morning, had an absolutely iron-clad good reason to cry that morning and had not GOD not done that day a new thing the likes of which had never before been known, Mary's reason for crying would have been also correct.**

That's why Jesus doesn't rebuke, scold, and admonish Mary for crying. There is no hint of "*Knock it off*" or "*Silly woman, open your eyes!*" Jesus himself knew that he and Mary both needed the tears if the truth of what just happened was going to come to what this exactly all means:

We have the hope of new life smack where we need it most—in the midst of a world full of death and dying!

So for now, we hold on to that hope of new life without our just yet escaping the very death in whose midst the Good News of the Gospel because it truly good news indeed!

Once Mary sees who it is behind her—she leaps to her feet and does the utterly logical thing of throwing herself at Jesus in one big hug! And Jesus stops her! That doesn't

seem very nice. In all of life there are some people who hug all the time and some who just prefer a civil handshake. But even those of us who are not “huggers” typically allow an embrace in certain situations of singular joy and astonishment! You may typically dislike hugs, but if your kid swished the winning basket for Hawai'i Baptist Academy with one second on the clock—you'll be happy to get a hug from everyone around you in the bleachers!

But not Jesus. “No hugs,” as he says. “You can't hold onto me until I have ascended and gone up to the Father.” Jesus says to Mary, “You can't hold me here.” Surely she wanted to hug Jesus. Now that Mary had this beloved Lord with her once more, she never wanted to lose Jesus again.

Yet—Jesus said no! No hugs. “You can't hold on to me until I have ascended to the Father.”

It seems that if Mary Magdalene stood for all humanity when she was weeping over the sadness of death's presence in our world—**she likewise stands in for all of us even after she learned the truth of Easter!**

- ✓ Mary, like us, can't quite take a hold of that resurrected person in the middle of the story.
- ✓ Mary, like us, couldn't hold Jesus there, keep Jesus there. Life goes not, death continues to stalk us and we are left with many tear that have not yet been dried from our eyes.

So Mary runs back to where the other disciples are and becomes the first apostle and minister in the Christian Church as she becomes the first to declare to another person, “I have seen the Lord!” She saw Jesus, even if she couldn’t hold onto him.

And the Good News is that if you have faith, then you also have seen the Lord! The trumpets may not always blare and blast out at every moment of your life as result. In fact, you may well still do your share of crying too. But it is in the midst of those bitter tears that Easter happens.

We discover a hope, and then cling to the joy of that hope, so as to remind ourselves that death is not the end! By faith, we have seen the Lord. And for now, that is enough! Enough!

Doing the Word

So on this Easter Sunday 2013, what is the Word of God for us?

- 1. ONE: Easter reminds and helps us to re-remember the Good News we can live by and also live with!**

Because somewhere in the shadows of your life and my life—a **truly risen Savior is lurking, bursting with new life!** We all see—the darkness of this world does not need to lift completely in ways no one could miss for the truth of Easter to be available.

- ✓ Easter is here!
- ✓ Easter is now!
- ✓ Jesus in here!
- ✓ Jesus is now!

2. TWO: Jesus knows your name!

Just as sure that Jesus knew Mary's name—Jesus knows your name too!

- ✓ Resurrection is about experiencing miracles—when we least expect them.
- ✓ Resurrection emerges out of our deepest needs when GOD makes a way where there is no way!

3. THREE: No matter how deep the darkness of your life is or may seem—listen for that voice calling your name!

- ✓ Listen for Jesus' voice calling you!
- ✓ Listen and then start living Jesus' new life right now!
- ✓ Let us rejoice on this Easter Sunday for this is the day the GOD has made—let us rejoice and be transformed in it!

Sent in the Word

Easter begins in nonsense!

- ✓ Easter is counter-cultural! Our faith and how we live our faith is to be deliberately different with the social norm around us!

- ✓ Easter is counter-intuitive—counter to and be at odds with what our perception would lead us to expect.
- ✓ Paul called the proclamation of the cross and the empty tomb to be “foolishness to the Greeks.”
- ✓ Even in 2013—it’s nonsense to modern-day folks!
- ✓ The church in especially in North American and Hawai‘i has become sufficiently enculturated and sufficiently accepted as a part of the socio-cultural landscape that the deep chasm between church and society, between gospel and secular wisdom—is not always easy to see.

Yet Easter Sunday Morning is one way to recover the sheer mystery, the sheer wonder, the absolute majesty of what we proclaim as Christians!

SO SISTERS AND BROTHERS ON THIS EASTER SUNDAY, GO AND LIVE AND SHARE YOUR FAITH TODAY AND HELP OTHERS TO RE-REMEMBER!

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