

“What Are You Seeing?”

Text: John 20:1-18

On Friday this week I spent some time with Aubrey and Kay Knight and their daughter, Debbie Honeker. Kay was reporting to Sky Ridge Hospital for back surgery. Aubrey, Debbie and I were waiting in the waiting area for what seemed like a long time while Kay was prepped for surgery.

While we sat waiting Kay’s I-phone rang indicating that a text message had been received. Aubrey...as if nothing unusual happened...handled the phone...using his index finger he made a few swipes across the screen...announced that his other daughter Penny had just texted...and he proceeded to answer her text...

Penny who was texting in...thought that she was communicating with her mother...with Kay...after a few text messages back and forth...Aubrey figured he better communicate to Penny that it was he who was replying to her texts and not her mother...

Needless to say...Penny was stunned...she couldn’t believe it...she texted back at one point saying...this is scary...dad’s texting.

Aubrey leaned over to me and said...“Brian, this is very significant...I just sent my first ever text!”

As I sat there with Aubrey and Debbie...I couldn't help but think of our text for this morning...

While on a very different level of reality... the gospel intends to tell us that something significant took place...and like Penny not realizing who it was with whom she was communicating...Mary had a similar experience as she engaged Jesus in conversation...

This account from John chapter twenty, like the other gospels, communicates for us a mystery...there are things about Jesus' resurrection that will forever leave us wondering and trying to comprehend what took place.

One thing of many that I wonder about is Mary's conversation with these two angels. John's gospel indicates that Mary bent over to look into the tomb and then she saw two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been lying...one at the head and the other at the feet...

Well...having just been to Jerusalem and having bent over to look into a tomb that may have been the one in which Jesus' body had been laid...and which tradition suggests that it is...the actual niches into which bodies were placed are relatively small and I can't imagine how two beings...angels or otherwise...could even fit into such a space!

There are things about Jesus' resurrection accounts that I can't grasp. The good news is...the testimony of the gospels suggests that there were things Jesus' disciples didn't get either.

There is a mystery to Jesus' resurrection and yet there is a power about it too. If there wasn't a power about it...we wouldn't have the stories that we have. And so...it is to these stories that we turn to hear something about faith and how it is we can live out such faith...

I find the opening of John's account intriguing. We watch Peter and the other disciple—the one whom Jesus loved—running to the tomb at Mary's word that Jesus' body had been removed...

The one Jesus' loved, we're told, gets there first but it is Peter who actually enters the tomb first. However, while scholars debate this, it is clear per the gospel that it is the "other" disciple about whom it is said, upon seeing the abandoned grave clothes, "...he saw and believed."

Jesus' resurrection is a mystery and I suppose it's safe to say that we'll never know for sure what really happened for this disciple of Jesus in the tomb except to say something happened that changed his life...that changed his way of looking at reality...something happened to inspire him to believe in that which was difficult to comprehend.

Something occurred that we can only imagine prompted him to live his life more in the way of love that Jesus modeled throughout his life and ultimately throughout his final days...a love that prompted Jesus even to lay down his life for his friends...

Jesus' life is inspiring. Jesus had a perspective on faith, religion, politics and social realities that literally turned people's thinking and worldviews upside-down. Jesus had a way of looking at people...and he had a way of getting people to look at people...as fellow human beings who shared a common humanity...

Jesus' mission and desire was to help people treat people differently...to treat people with a dignity and respect...with justice and mercy...with grace and love...and don't get me wrong...Jesus didn't seem to have a problem calling a spade, a spade...he didn't have a problem calling out the hypocritical nature of the religious authorities and telling them a thing or two...

But if someone was not a spade...Jesus wanted her or him treated with kindness and with a care that respected her or him for being who and how she or he was...

Who is it that inspires you to live in such a way? Hopefully Jesus gives us—gives you—inspiration. But who else in your life comes to mind that has inspired you...that has caused you to live with a greater tendency toward love?

The mystery and the power of Jesus' resurrection lives on as we do what we can to model our lives after Jesus and others who love and care for people...who love and care for peace, justice and mercy.

The second half of our text focuses on Mary and who she saw. First she saw those enigmatic angels and then she saw Jesus...but she did not recognize him until she heard him say, "Mary..." And then we're told that she went and proclaimed to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

A couple weeks ago I shared that the verb "to see" is used over and over...in almost every chapter in John...and so I have to wonder if perhaps John's gospel wants us...even us today...to *SEE* something about God...about faith that may just change us and prompt us to live differently than we do.

Personally, I saw something this week that is changing me. I did something this week that I've never done before. I participated in Calvary's foot-washing ceremony during our Thursday noon-time service.

Talk about uncomfortable and different...talk about being vulnerable...I'm pretty particular about personal space and so it took a lot for me to wash someone else's feet no less have my own be washed.

But something happened to me...I saw a glimpse of what it is like to genuinely care for another in that act of foot-washing...as I watched others go after me...I reflected on the courage and care that it takes to really reach out to another and to treat them with love and dignity and respect...

Jesus' resurrection with its mysteriousness and power prompted his disciples to eventually act and live differently...I'm wondering how you and I might live and act differently today...Jesus' life prompts us to do this.

I watched before my very eyes a discussion unfold on facebook this week...a discussion between Christians...between Christ-followers...it happened within a span of about two hours...49 comments were generated...some of them were lengthy and lethal...it was a conversation about one of our social realities that is seen differently by different people...

If you didn't know these folk on facebook were Christian...you wouldn't have known they were because of their language and the absolutely mean-spirited and disparaging nature of their words about other people different from themselves. It was sad.

I thought to myself, "These folk have not yet seen the significance of the mystery and power of the resurrection because they have not grasped the different way of love seen in Jesus."

A different way of love.

While sitting with Aubrey and his daughter Debbie on Friday, Debbie told me a texting story about her husband, Conrad, and their son, Chris. She gave me permission to share this. When Conrad first started to use his cell phone for texting...he was quite touched by the texts that Chris, his son, often sent. Chris used quite often the abbreviation LOL.

Conrad, not knowing that LOL is generally used for laughing-out-loud...thought that it meant lots-of-love. He was touched that Chris texted this to him as much as he did.

A reality of the Easter story we proclaim is that there are often people laughing-out-loud at the faith we profess because we don't often live it out in the ways we should...

Our faith in Christ requires us to live differently than we often do and with lots-of-love.

What are you seeing today? If you see love...than there is something of Christ's resurrection mystery and power taking root in you. And when this happens...we can say...Amen!