

Service: Morning Prayer - Mr. P. A. Tayler
Sermon - Mr. John Bragaw

Receiving Mite Boxes following sermon -
Mr. Horace M. Harwell, Supt. of
Sunday School.

Psalm:

First Lesson:

Second Lesson:

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Sermon:

Remember the story in the Easter Day sermon? "... a little boy about five years old was dying. The nurses knew that he was going to die, but they did not know what to say to him. So they called the chaplain and asked him to speak to this small boy. And as the Chaplain sat on the edge of the little boy's bed, he saw that he had roused enough from his coma to hear him and he said to him: 'My son, God made you; and ~~now~~ God loves you; God came into the world and died for you; and now God wants you to be with Him forever!' And the little boy looked up and he said, 'Will you thank Him for me!'" Even this small boy knew in his small way that something did lie beyond; but how can we believe as little children? How can we seriously and sincerely find that Jesus Christ lives today as truly as He lived almost 2000 years ago? And finding that He lives, we may live also! How can we learn the lesson of faith - faith in the Easter Story? Perhaps it might help to return to the resurrection story and see how one of these present sought Jesus.

Mary Magdalene was looking for Jesus about the garden believing in her mind that all of this was impossible. It could not be true; she must be dreaming! She then looked into the tomb; someone was behind her! She assumed that it was the gardner and turning to him she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." But the figure behind her said, "Mary!" to which she replied simply and with a startled voice, "Rabboni!" (That is to say, "My Master!") For Mary in her confused state had thought that her companion in the garden was the gardner; however, it was the risen Christ. Her search and her confusion could be a parallel to our searchings today for the risen Christ and so I would have you note three mistakes which Mary seemed to make in her search for our Lord on that first Easter Sunday.

First, Mary could not find our Lord because she was seeking for a dead Christ. We so often do the same thing - we are so moved by present-day preaching the religious revival that we are directed to look at His record to see what He did, what He taught and what He suffered; this record so impresses us that we take our stand on Calvary with a very real emotion in our hearts - but our experience goes no farther! We have not yet found nor

experienced the risen Christ. And until Christianity becomes more of a living religion with a living Lord, we Christians will continue as did Mary to seek a dead Lord and continue not to find Him.

Second, and perhaps one of the greatest insights in the resurrection story, it was not after all Mary Magdalene who came upon Christ, but Christ who found her! And this oddly enough is the usual experience to which Christians testify. This perhaps is the point of the whole Gospel in the first place - that God is seeking us, not only when we have lost Him and cannot come on the way home to Him again, search as we may, but even when we are separated from Him and do not miss Him - He is still seeking us! If you are lost from the living Christ, if your spiritual life has dimmed and become thin and drab and meager, you can be sure that He is searching for you; for the Scriptures tell us confidently that He seeks "until He finds." (Luke 15:4, 8)

Third, and perhaps more difficult to understand than anything else is the fact that although Mary Magdalene was seeking Him with her whole being, she did not recognize Christ when she saw Him! This was not altogether her fault for apparently Christ was in a different form - He had changed; she thought He was the gardner. And so it is oftentimes with us in life - we bravely accept some wounding experience as being all that we can see and understand; yet God Himself is in this experience and has come quite close to us; perhaps He is calling us to some service for Him; and with "His own hands is fashioning us into the instrument He needs for some important purpose." But often we cannot see this; oftentimes never, but sometimes later as was Mary's experience. There is a story about St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Order of Monks, which tells that he was terrified of leprosy, a dreaded disease in his day. And one afternoon in his path stood a leper. He was instinctively afraid of this contaminating disease. It made him sick! But then he rallied; and ashamed of himself, ran and cast his arms about the sufferer's neck and kissed him, passing on. A moment later he looked back and there was no one there, only the empty road in the hot sunlight. All his days thereafter he was sure it was no leper but Christ Himself whom he had met on this dusty road."

Sometimes, like St. Francis, all we see is some needy and perhaps some unattractive soul; someone who does not appeal to us, but who lacks friendship, who needs assistance. "Did you not recognize me?" asks the Master. "That was I. And inasmuch as you do it to the least of these my brethren, you do it unto me!"

And so it is this morning that our children in this parish are stretching out their arms of love and friendship to the unattractive, to the needy in three different areas of our Church around the world:- in Liberia, in Spokane (Washington State), and in South Dakota. For here does our Lord masquerade as the black man in need of education, better homes and better facilities for proper health and nutrition; as the poor migrant workers who require stability in their lives - a certain foundation upon which to build their lives that only the Church can offer; and as Indians who have been denied much of their own birthright and whose needs are many today. We join our young people today in stretching out our helping and loving arms with our Mite Boxes and Offerings filled to minister to Our Lord whom we find all over the world in the disguise of the sick, the unloved and the starving millions.

How ~~will~~ will they find our living Lord if we do not show Him to them by the very example of our lives! Mary Magdalene had lived with Jesus and had cause to know Him well; He forgave her of many sins! How much more difficult is it for us today to know and make known to others the risen Christ when even those who professed then as well as today to believe in His Name do not do these things which He commanded of His disciples - "love one another even as I have loved you!" And it is with these offerings that we will bring the resurrection story to the ears of many more millions of people around the world. As they receive this aid knowing that it has come in the name of the risen Christ, will turn their eyes skyward as did the small boy with a great faith and say to us through Him, "Please thank Him for us!" For it is only in this way that the peoples of the world will find Him and believe.