

"The Trajectory of the Third Day"

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King City UC

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Prayer for Illumination

Open our eyes and soften our hearts, O God, through the work of your Holy Spirit, so that in the hearing of your Word, we may receive new life.
Amen.

Scripture Readings

Mark 16:1-8

¹ When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

< Children's Time >

Today is the third Sunday of Easter. Christians celebrate Easter for six Sundays because it is very important for Christianity. During the season, we will reflect on the event and meaning of Easter, so I'd like to walk you through step by step. My friends, what is Easter all about? It's about Jesus' new life. Jesus was born, lived 2000 years ago, and was crucified on the cross. The amazing thing is that Jesus regained his life after his death. The Bible reports how this happened. Actually, the most important thing in the Bible is about Christ: "Christ has come, Christ died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again." Among these four sentences, the most important part is that "Christ is risen" because the other three sentences are dependent on this pivotal and crucial factor. That's why the Bible tries to provide details on the resurrection of Jesus. However, the concept of resurrection is very hard to understand because it hasn't happened before or even after. We cannot prove that the resurrection happened just once.

I am going to talk about science because we easily understand it. Scientifically speaking, if you cannot repeat the result under the same condition, it cannot be used as evidence, meaning it is not scientifically acknowledged or accepted. For example, water boils at 100 degrees Celsius at standard atmospheric pressure. That is a scientific fact because we can reproduce the same result under the same conditions over and over again. However, resurrection is a different story. We cannot scientifically accept resurrection because we cannot make it happen again. So, it is not scientifically accepted. My question is, if something is not scientifically accepted, does that mean it's fake or false?

I learned about life and death from a scientist who teaches physics at a university. According to him, life is a miracle; it's not just a poetic description but a scientific one. No life is the default status, and life and energy is a miracle.. Think about the universe. The size of the universe cannot be measured in today's knowledge, and the more amazing thing is that it seems almost impossible to find life in the universe, except for earth. Only Earth has living beings so far. Astrologists merely assume that there could be other living beings in the vast universe. But look! Isn't it amazing that we are witnessing living things around us, just beside us? Ainsley, are you alive? You are not a robot, right?

Yes, we are surrounded by living beings on the earth, and that is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. You might remember that I shared a grain that contains 30, 60, and 100 times the potential for new life. How is this possible? It seemed like a dead grain, but it can come to life in spring. Wouldn't the resurrection of Jesus be similar, like the life of a rice grain?

Unfortunately, I cannot prove the resurrection of Jesus, who died and rose again in three days. But I believe it is possible for God to give life and sustain this universe. That belief is a mystery, and I hope you also have a good chance to ponder the resurrection of Jesus, celebrating the resurrection with me. May the grace, wisdom, and insight of the resurrected Jesus be with you, my friends!

<Reflection>

Good morning, everyone! We are in the Eastertide. What a beautiful, wonderful and great season for everyone! The resurrection of Jesus is the most holy and mysterious thing in Christianity: God came to earth into

human history, and humans witnessed his death on the cross. In three days, he rose again.

And some people witnessed Jesus' resurrection at that time, and the Bible closely records it. Even though the documents were written 2000 years ago, their contents are consistent, although the details of some parts are slightly different. Today's Bible passage also contributes to the records of resurrection.

You know this story very well, but I'll highlight some points. Mark's writer starts with a description of time. Chapter 16, verse 1 says Mary Magdalene and Mary of two disciples commenced to the tomb. Then what is the timing? It says, "When the Sabbath was over," meaning that Jesus was crucified on the day before Sabbath, which is Friday at noon, and the body was placed just before the Sabbath. The Jews didn't do anything on the Sabbath day, so the women were anxiously waiting and waiting to visit Jesus' body. As soon as the morning was broken, the two Marys packed the spices to anoint the body.

An interesting point here is that no male disciples stepped up, but two brave women headed to the tomb. Is this because they loved Jesus so much? They even didn't have any plan for the heavy stone that blocked the entrance of the tomb. They discussed this in verse 3: They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

That is my second point. Did they have a plan for the stone that blocked the tomb? No. They questioned and worried, but their feet already walked to the tomb. Some might think they lacked intelligence because they

were not equipped with the tools or solutions. We humans need plans; we need proper logic, but we must understand or try to understand that sometimes God is working beyond human logic. The two women seemed to have no plans, but still, they went to Jesus.

The next point is that they met an angel or angels. In Mark, they met a man wearing a white cloth in the tomb, while John chapter 20 writes two angels. I think John's description is more accurate because he "counted" an exact number of the angels. However, Mark writes about one angel at the scene because the angel directly talks to them. Whether one or two, the point here is that the figure of an angel or angels looked like humans, wearing white clothes. According to the Bible, God has sent his messengers to humans on earth. And their figures were primarily humans. God even sent his son, and the figure of the Son of God was, what, a human: Jesus. I believe God is still sending divine messengers in the form of humans. Or who knows? God may use even sinful humans for his purpose in this wicked world.

My fourth point about the first scene of the resurrection is that Mary Magdalene met Jesus for the first time. John chapter 20 writes that the two Marys found that the tomb was empty. They hurried to go back to the male disciples and reported the empty tomb. Why did they hurry to go back to the male disciples? The two Marys wanted to brag off to witness the empty tomb? No, they thought Jesus' body was stolen, so they decided to ask the other disciples to find the body. The old Mary stayed, probably she must've been exhausted, but the younger Mary ran to the tomb again with male disciples.

Now, Peter and John, accompanying Mary Magdalene, ran to the tomb and found the empty tomb. The two male disciples returned to their homes

with great disappointment and frustration. Was Mary disappointed and frustrated? Yes. Did Mary go back to her home right away? No. She wept a lot with deep sadness and disappointment. Her sadness was too deep to move her feet right away. She took some steps around the tomb and checked inside again. Then, all of a sudden, she met whom? She met the two angels in the tomb. The two angels tried to explain Jesus' resurrection. Mary felt their explanation and consolation could have been more helpful. She decided to look for the body outside. So she turned to go outside and saw a man. He seemed like a gardener. Still, she made several steps and wept bitterly. Finally, the gardener started talking to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" - It was Jesus' first words after resurrection. Jesus revealed his resurrection to Mary Magdalene, and she honourably became the first witness of the resurrection, while the two male disciples lost the chance. My question here is-you tell me the answer: Would Mary have met Jesus if she left with the two disciples? I don't think so. She met Jesus because she stayed and spent the time weeping bitterly. Jesus must have seen everything the three people were doing. Mary wept so hard that Jesus probably wanted to console her. First, the two angels, they failed, and, later, Jesus. Do you remember what the angels and Jesus said to her? They commonly said, "Woman, why are you weeping?" They tried to console her by saying that. Her desperate passion and love for Jesus led her to be the first witness of Jesus' resurrection.

My next point in this scene is that Jesus calls her name in a personal manner. Even after Jesus' consolation, she didn't stop weeping, and Jesus decided to reveal himself by saying, "Mary!" We do not know exactly, but they must've known the way to call each other. Mary instantly knew it was Jesus and responded. As Jesus called Mary in a unique and personal manner, I believe Jesus calls every one of you in a particular and special way. So

does our Christian faith. God calls us both collectively and personally. We respond to God both collectively and individually. It is the same with the matter of sin, forgiveness, grace, faith, and redemption. The important thing is that one thing cannot be replaced by the other. That is, if your individual sins are forgiven, that doesn't mean you are totally free from your communal sins. Vice versa, if you profess your faith in the community, that doesn't mean you profess your own faith in God on your own. Mary Magdalene had a well-balanced faith both in individual and communal levels.

The last point I want to emphasize is about the structure of Jesus' movement. I mentioned this structure of three, twelve, seventy-two, five hundred, five thousand followers and disciples, women's groups and a secret group who hid their identities. In the first scene of Jesus' resurrection, he asks Mary to tell his active disciples, "I am ascending to Father." Jesus firmly accentuates this by saying, "Go to my brothers and say to them." For Jesus, informing the disciples of his ascension to God was urgent and critical. He didn't just show off his new form of body to the people in public. Instead, he only showed the scene of ascension to the five hundred selected disciples. Why is that so? Why didn't Jesus show his miracle to everyone but only to the five hundred? Why? It's a question that I'm still working on myself. When I know it, I'll share it with you. However, the point is that Jesus considered the most essential thing in Jesus' movement, so he had to ask Mary for the message. Again, as I mentioned in my previous sermon, Jesus' movement was well-structured. And he took care of them respectively.

So far, I have made more than a few points in the first scene of Jesus' resurrection:

1. Two female disciples were courageous to visit Jesus' tomb.
2. They set out to the tomb, although they didn't have any plans for the big stone.
3. They met an angel or angels, and the angels looked like humans.
4. Mary met the resurrected Jesus for the first time when she stayed and wept bitterly.
5. Mary recognized Jesus because he called her in a personal manner.
6. Lastly, Jesus asked Mary to pass his message on to his five hundred active disciples in order to work efficiently.

We can share tons of information and meanings of the resurrection, but I hope you put yourself into the scene in Golgotha and see where you stand with these six points.

1. Am I going to Jesus' tomb under persecution of the Roman Empire?
2. Is my love for Jesus more significant than my logic?
3. Am I noticing God's angels in the form of angels around me?
4. Do I understand and meet Jesus genuinely?
5. Am I recognizing Jesus not only on a communal level but on an individual level?
6. And lastly, am I in the five hundred who saw Jesus ascension?

These are such open questions, and it is your turn to answer sincerely – not to me but to you and to God. While reflecting on these questions, may God's grace be upon you to respond sincerely. Let us pray silently.