

# The Rising

April 4, 2010

St. Paul's - Richmond United Church

Season of Easter

Easter Sunday

John 20:1-18

Read the Bible passage: [John 20:1-18](#), The Message; or [John 20:1-18](#), The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Click here: [George Hermanson's sermon](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this post.

The Rev. Dr. George Hermanson

One of the warnings we get is be careful with your personal information because there are people out to steal our identity. Identity theft is with us and it has always been with us. Those who experience it speak of losing their sense of self. They have become a nobody - a sense they no longer exist. They say their sense of self - their soul has been stolen. They no longer exist, cannot be seen. In the past, though, it was much more violent. The Romans used the Cross to achieve this - the one crucified becomes a nobody. Their identity stolen. Their reality is destroyed - it is as if they never existed. Crucifixion destroyed identity.

Yet here we are with Mary. The one she loved was crucified. The Romans tried to wipe away any sense of Jesus - to make him a nobody, to wipe away all memory of him. But for Mary it was not an end. She is still searching. She is looking for meaning. We, too, gather this Easter morning to celebrate the memory of a crucified one - Jesus.

Like her we want our lives to have meaning. We want fulfillment, healing, and even ecstasy. So we go looking. We seek release yet we are searching among the tombs. Looking in all the wrong places. Like Mary, we often seek life in the tombs. That which is gone. Like Mary, we discover that life is not found in death, in the wreckage of the day.

A word is spoken to Mary. Why do you look for the living among the dead? Rise up - rise up. The irony. The clarity. The paradox. Turning from the tomb to search in the rising - in life, Mary is transformed, transported.

She remembers her time with Jesus. Remembers how she saw the world as an ongoing expression of God. With Jesus she experienced reality as gracious and loving, and ultimately revealed the glory of God. The word Mary hears at the tomb is, come on up for the rising. Easter and spring get confused. Of course spring does bring a spring to our steps. Rising though, is more than the end of winter and new buds coming. It is true that sorrow can give way when we are greeted by sweet, earthly scent. Rising is much more transformative, for it is a way of life, a way of seeing the light that lights the dark caverns of our soul. Rising is a perspective that helps us to see the dynamic love of God hidden in the suffering and injustices of the world. Rising raises us to live a vision of creativity, life and hope. Rising is lived daily - being those who teach others about the life of rising. This is: to create hearts of light, power and beauty that make us sing songs of praise

and gratitude, a canticle that joins all voices of creatures and the cosmos itself together in shouting rise up, rise up.

Mary, and we, are called - in this rising of a nobody who becomes a somebody - to trust the rising sun in this garden of darkness - to look for the dancing sun. To do that, though, she had to make her way through the darkness, throw off the layers of protection that we wrap ourselves in.

Trusting the divine is a struggle, for trust calls us to throw off the layers of protection we cloth ourselves in - anxiety, pain from past wounds, addictions, and complexes. This rising, this vision of the world immersed in a divine and gracious Presence is not easy to trust. Like those early witnesses we do not quickly embrace the rising. We find it difficult to open our hearts to spiritual healing, to greet the light and warmth of grace with the freedom of open hearts and allow ourselves to be embraced by it.

This Sunday we are invited to experience of the rising so we can uncover God's light and warmth in our world of chaos and darkness. We do that by following Mary's searching in the garden.

Silence

Nothingness

in the darkness

Silence, waiting to be broken.

Yearning, reaching out, touching

a note

a beat

a sound

and the vast heavenly hosts stood still

as the rising comes

not yet spoken

breaking, calling, luring

a sense of wonder rising

Rising out of the earth

In the garden of the rising sky

Can you see, coming through the fission of the earth, along the water ways,

the movement of rising, The sky of peace

The sky of mercy

The sky of love

The sky of memory and sharing

The sky of blessed life

Seeking completion

wholeness

healing

Sky full of light

God's dreaming, calling

over the chaos, the beginnings of life rising

Listen to the intensity

Listen to the harmony  
The cry of love  
From the inner imagination  
From the edge of experience  
Love comes tumbling down  
Like a watcher at the moment of dawn,  
love comes to us,  
uninvited, without our calling, overtaking us  
This grand creation  
This global circling transformation  
This heart-stopping beauty  
Bringing together all that is and will be  
We are there, in that moment, standing at the tomb, on tip toes, looking  
through the veil, to the rising  
Feeling the touch of love,  
Feel the love in our souls,  
No longer distracted  
our pores are open  
Our heart is open

Filled with the rising of Jesus we now see the world with new eyes, new understanding. Now our hearts follow the path of radical trust that illuminates both personal and cultural darkness. By seeking the rising in life we can rely on our deepest faith in times of crisis and pray for strength to live lives of rising, being those who announce hope. We trust the wonder of this world for have found in this rising the capacity to "seize God in all things." Such openhearted seeing is an ongoing prayer. No words are necessary, only attentiveness to the rising of God already present in our world. With Easter eyes we can see and feel this reality - this rising of the kingdom of God in the events of our world. We can say Amen, Amen, Amen.

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