

## **Easter 2014 Readings and Sermon**

**Rev. Tracey Robinson-Harris**

**“Practice Resurrection”**

**April 20, 2014**

### **Reading: Mark 16:1-8**

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. <sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

<sup>3</sup> They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” <sup>4</sup> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.” <sup>8</sup> 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.

### **Reading: excerpt Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front by Wendell Berry**

So, friends, every day do something that won't compute.

Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing.

Take all that you have and be poor.

Love someone who does not deserve it.

Denounce the government and embrace the flag.

Hope to live in that free republic for which it stands.

Give your approval to all you cannot understand.

Praise ignorance, for what man has not encountered he has not destroyed.

Ask the questions that have no answers.

Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.

Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant,  
that you will not live to harvest.

Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into the mold.

Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.

Put your faith in the two inches of humus

that will build under the trees every thousand years.

Listen to carrion--put your ear close,  
and hear the faint chattering of the songs that are to come.  
Expect the end of the world.  
Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable.  
Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.  
Practice resurrection.

## **Sermon**

There is a rising.

Up from the deep.

Out of the shadows.

Through the sting and darkness of death.

From the shock of the blow.

And the recoil from the horror.

There is a rising.

A flicker of light.

A sputtered lift.

A catch of the breath.

There is a rising.

With these words the Rev. Liz Walker began the service of remembrance on the one year anniversary of the Marathon Bombings this past Tuesday. Those who died were honored. Several among the survivors spoke and others were spoken of. Given all they have been through – all they have lost, all they have endured, all they have overcome – the words “there is a rising” are a powerful, even audacious, testimony to the resilience of the human spirit. Among the many stories these are three I remember.

Jeff Bauman was waiting for his girlfriend near the finish line. He lost both legs in the blast. A year on he's engaged, and will soon become a father. A year on he is walking, sometimes unsteadily, on prosthetic legs.

A decade ago Carlos Arredondo tried to take his own life upon learning of the death of his son, a Marine serving in Iraq. Once undocumented and now a citizen, Carlos was the man in the cowboy hat holding the cloth tourniquet tight as he, along with two first responders, rushed Jeff Bauman to an ambulance.

Ballroom dancer Adrienne Haslett-Davis lost part of her left leg in the bombings. This past March she danced the Rumba at the 2014 Annual Technology, Entertainment and Design Conference (TED Conference) wearing a prosthetic leg created for her at MIT, a leg that was made to dance.

"The human spirit," Rev. Walker said last Tuesday, "the human spirit will rise despite anything, despite everything."

There is a rising.

"Now 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." Together the women walked to the tomb where Jesus had been buried expecting to tend to his body in a final act of respect and love. They worried about who would move the huge and heavy stone that blocked the entrance to the tomb. When they arrived they found the stone rolled away, the tomb empty. The Gospel of Mark says the women fled and said nothing to anyone. They were afraid.

I imagine them – the two Marys and Salome - as they flee. Having been confronted by emptiness, passing that tomb stone, I imagine them saying quietly to themselves then aloud to one another . . . what does this emptiness mean? The poet has written (Rilke, *The Book of a Monastic Life*) "When I look over the chasm of myself – it seems my God is dark and like a web: a hundred roots silently drinking. This is the ferment I grow out of. More I don't know. . . "

Up from the deep. Out of the shadows. There is a rising

Wendell Berry's manifesto from the mad farmer liberation front is something of an odd companion for these stories. Except for two words – the two words with which the poem ends. Practice resurrection. This is the point of the manifesto. The litany of things preceding these two words reads like a to do

list for those who might want to engage in the practice. Love the Lord. Love the world. . . Love someone who does not deserve it. . . Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant, that you will not live to harvest. . . Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.

Though they are the manifesto's last words, this is not the last thing on the list.

Practice resurrection.

Such a litany could be taken from the stories of survivors of the marathon tragedy or from the stories of any of the three women who fled from the empty tomb. It could be taken from the stories of your life . . . or mine.

I remember . . . in 1995 when the fire in our apartment building was finally out and it was safe to go in to see the losses and gather a few belongings I grabbed my dance shoes and fled to the dance floor the next day . . . And nine years later when too many losses in too short a time left me lost and in grief I remembered that time before . . . and I grabbed my dance shoes and fled to the dance floor once again. If you'd seen me you'd have said I was dancing waltz or tango. I'd have told you, don't be fooled by appearances. I was practicing resurrection.

We have learned, writes Rev. Peter Fleck, "Resurrection can take place on any day of the week, in any week of the year, at any place in the universe . . . this newness is available to all of us. . . Nothing can disqualify us."

Nothing can disqualify us.

The human spirit will rise despite anything, despite everything. Excerpt. . .

The Blackstonian (a word used to symbolize the spirit and culture of Black Bostonians) is a newspaper serving Black, Latino, Cape Verdean and other Peoples of Color in Boston and the surrounding area. Two days ago, on April 18<sup>th</sup>, the paper reported that at least two hundred and thirty seven people have been shot in Boston since last year's marathon, 35 of them fatally. When asked why his paper tracks these shootings editor Jamarhl Crawford said "Phrases like "One Boston" and "Boston Strong" echoed on news broadcasts, appeared on memorials, in headlines, even on the fronts of buses. In the same week (as the Marathon bombings) there were 14 shootings across the city. . . . "One Boston" rang hollow in communities long plagued by violence. We began keeping track of the Shootings to ask. . . Is there really One Boston? . . . Is the violence that occurs

on a day to day basis acceptable? Is the reaction and response to violence different depending on where it happens or who it happens to?"

Nothing should disqualify us. Not where we live. Not who we are. Not our access to resources. Nothing. Resurrection can take place on any day of the week, in any week of the year, at any place in the universe . . . this newness is available to all of us.

## **PAUSE**

In the ancient Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem near a shrine called the Chapel of the Tomb and the Resurrection of Jesus, a processional banner was hung. On it were the words of the traditional Easter greeting in Eastern Christianity – Christ is risen. Along with the greeting there was an image of the resurrection in which Jesus is not alone. Jesus is depicted as reaching out toward others, bringing others along with him.

In concluding the story of his first encounter with this surprising image from Eastern Christianity, theologian and historian John Dominic Crossan said simply "Finally. Equal opportunity resurrection."

When no one is disqualified.

Finally. There is a rising.