

**“CELEBRATE TODAY”**

**EASTER SUNDAY**

John 20: 1-18

Rev. Ed Hoekstra

**Resurrection was off Mary's radar.** Mary Magdalene was totally surprised by the resurrection of Jesus. Mary, who was stricken with grief, would not have believed he had risen unless she saw him alive. The fact that the corpse was gone, suggested no hope to her. How often have we been so down on a set of circumstances that we were blinded to the light that Jesus can bring or has already brought to the situation. Mary was overcome with the darkness of the Jesus death that she could only be thinking this: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him” (John 20: 2). In Mary’s mind the grave was an empty hole in the ground. It was a place of hopelessness. Death was the end, and the person she loved, had died and was not coming back.

**Jesus resurrection prophecy was known.** Though Mary was not even thinking about the possibility of resurrection, ironically, Jesus enemies remembered that he said it. These detractors certainly did not believe with faith that it would happen. One can understand their attitude and motive from what they said: “...we remember what the imposter said while he was still alive, ‘after three days I will rise again.’ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first (Matthew 27: 63-65)”.

John, the author of Gospel of John, also remembered hearing this message from Jesus lips, and when he saw that the tomb was empty, he believed (John 20: 8). However, the scripture does not say that Peter also believed, though he was the first to enter the tomb. I think Peter was among the disciples that the scriptures states ‘still did not understand’ (John 20: 9).

**The past does not determine our future!** Mary Magdalene experienced such love and forgiveness from Jesus, that with Jesus death, her savior was gone! Her world came crashing down! Jesus was indeed her Messiah and savior, and within one short week, he was dead. Now her hope for the future was dashed, and the freedom she was experiencing from her past was also gone. She lost everything with Christ’s death, and could not see any light in her future. Everything changed when she saw the risen Christ! The same could be said of Peter who was experiencing such guilt in Jesus death because he denied Jesus three times. His deep sadness probably clouded his memory of Jesus prophecy! Along with the other disciples, he was transformed from being a fearful captive to becoming a fearless evangelist! Sometimes we too

can feel defeated when facing huge obstacles because of our past. In spite of that God calls you to celebrate life because He is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

**This is the day that the Lord has made (Psalm 118: 24):** Living in the freedom of the risen Christ calls us to celebrate today! Every day in fact is the day that the Lord has made. There are two day that can ruin today: yesterday and tomorrow! I saw the following saying at a car repair garage close to Orillia, ON: "Yesterday is gone; tomorrow may never come, but today is a gift because it is called the present". In other words, today is a gift for us to enjoy in freedom, with forgiveness for stuff in the past and certain hope for the future because Jesus conquered death and everything that leads to death. We are free to love because we live in his love!

**"We do not know what the day holds, but we know who holds the day."** My wife Jackie passed this saying on to our son Nico and I. Certainly, in this life here on earth, we do not know if we will even make it through the day alive. We do not know what news, or pain, or suffering will be in store, but we can move ahead in confidence that He is with us; and through Christ's death and resurrection be assured that nothing can separate us from his love! Amen.