

March 31 2013, Easter

Scripture Lessons

Isaiah 65:17-25

Mark 15:42-16:8

Sermon      *Who Will Roll Away the Stone?*

Boy o boy! Every single night during the week before Palm Sunday, I remember waking up in a cold sweat after having had the strange, strangest dream. It was a dream with mixed up times and mixed up places and mixed up people. And it begins in the middle of Palm Sunday Church Service strangely enough.

With considerable flourish, I have just announced that I was going to be baptizing Marty's little granddaughter who we baptized quite a while ago, so that is why this thing is so kinda of mixed up in my mind. The proud parents bring her forward while the entire congregation smile from ear to ear. A hundred pairs of eyes are all fixed on me as I put aside my worship book and I lift the lid up on the baptismal font, and to my horror I find the basin is empty. It is bone dry. It is desiccated as the Sahara Desert. And as I keep my pleasant unruffled official clerical smile and I turned and I say in a clear and resonant voice, "Now Micki Weisbarth, the chairperson of the Diaconate, will go and obtain the water for the baptism."

Somewhat hesitantly Micki moves from her seat, but she is reassured by my smile and by my aura of confidence, and she leaves the sanctuary, and she goes into the kitchen, and she fills the pitcher with water. She returns and she hands it to me and I take it and I asked the congregation to bow their heads for a short prayer about how fresh water can be. (It was good folks). The parents and the congregation participate in the baptism with no apparent awareness that anything was ever amiss. In fact a number of people in the congregation whisper their approval of this new addition to this baptismal service in the worship book.

But then, strangely enough, in the rear of church, there are several other members of the Diaconate who stand up, each one holding up a large white card in their hands. Cards which say respectively say 9, 9, 10. It is a nearly perfect score for a nearly flawless performance in a tight situation.

Then the dream takes a strange twist which means that being so obsessed with congratulating me, I have cause to become preoccupied. I have skipped clear over the choir anthem, and only because Don DeChenne tugs at the sleeve of my robe and whispers to me, "Pastor Russ, you forgot us," that I do remember, finally that I have missed the choir number. I wonder to myself, 'Who is going to get me out of this mess. Maybe Don will, I don't know.'

Thankfully this is only a dream, a crazy dream, a dream that I made up by the way. But most of us do have days that can become like this or worse, dark days when things seem to start OK for a while, or we feel something off with a great sense of finesse, but to have the whole thing kinda of back fire or something else cave in on us on the process and then we wonder sometimes even in desperation. Who is going to get me out of this one? Who is going to clean this mess up that I have made? And at that point no matter who we are, no matter what the problem is, sometimes a light bulb goes on and we realize, ‘you know what, we can’t do life this anymore.’

We can’t do life without some help, without some support, without some comfort in those difficult times. So maybe we cry aloud or maybe we talk in the silence of our heart, in our prayers, and we echo the question in Mark’s Gospel lesson for today. “Who will roll this stone away?”

Who will help me move from this dark place in my life into the light? Who will roll away the stone that keeps me in the dark about why in the world I had to lose my loved one to death? Who will roll away the stone which keeps me in darkness as I face health problems that I might face every day? Who will roll away the stone which has darkened my relationship perhaps with my spouse, my partner, my child, with perhaps my parents, perhaps with a good friend? Who will roll away the stone which keeps me in the darkness in discontent with gift and the material possessions which God that seems to bless me with? Who will roll away the stone that keeps me from knowing the life of God’s presence in the midst of my everyday life?

Who will roll away the stone for us? If you remember that is the same question that went through the minds of Mary Magdalene and all the other women as they approached Jesus’ tomb that first Easter morning. It all seemed so final three days before. Jesus so cruelly tortured. Jesus so cruelly killed. Jesus so hastily buried in a buried grave. And certainly the sound of that great round stone falling into its place with a thud that still echoed in their ears as they approached the place where Jesus had been buried. Now time and time again they had seen Jesus roll the stones away from other people’ lives. Jesus had forgiven people’s sins. Jesus had fed the hungry. Jesus had taught and preached the Good News of God’s love in our lives. Jesus had cast out demons. Jesus had even raised other people from the dead and it was still difficult to believe that he was who he said he was. That he had the power to roll the stone death from the door of his own tomb. And the stone which weighed so heavily on the hearts of those women that day. But as they drew closer to the tomb they noticed to their amazement that the stone was already rolled away and a young man in white sat in the tomb with these words of instruction for the trembling women.” Don’t be afraid” “He is risen.” “He is Not here.”

Now many of us here in this congregation today have some very heavy stones that we are carrying or trying to carry in vain. Stones which are blocking the light of God's Love from the midst of our lives as we live each day. But Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth can and Jesus of Nazareth will help to roll away the stone which threaten us from experiencing of the life of a healthy relationship with God and with others in the midst of life.

But we have a part to play, first of all in allowing Jesus to come into our lives. Secondly, in having faith in God's power to move those stones away. Thirdly in trusting God as the women were asked to do that day by the young man at the tomb.

So on this Easter day we are reminded and asked to remember what the young man said was true "Don't be amazed." He said, He is risen." "He said, He is not here." Because there in that light, in that opening in that tomb each of us will find strength. Each of us will find the courage to roll away that heavy stones that burden our lives every day Walk in the light. Walk in the light.

Together we say AMEN