

Unless!!
Written by: Jennifer Murphy
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Gospel Reading: Matthew 28:1-10

Aim:

Things that we don't understand can bring fear and complacency, but there is power and hope and joy in a resurrected Jesus.

My experience with the Season of Creation began here at Rec. If I am being honest, I assumed that it was yet another wacky thing our creative community here at Rec talked about and yet no one else outside this circle would pay too much attention. My interest was minimal, because I really didn't consider how this applied much to me. I definitely tuned out when really big words were used: like Pope Francis' Encyclical on Climate Change. Years of sitting in the pews, asking the Lord to please reveal to me how the Season of Creation truly applies to me in my life. I concluded that the main "take away" for me, would be about the creation story in Genesis: "that in the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth and God placed Adam and Eve in the garden to tend and watch over it." Yep got it! Done! Season of Creation!

And our God, who I believe has an amazing sense of humor, intervened. As some of you may know, I was blessed to be asked to teach 8th and 9th graders this summer at our Diocesan Camp: Duncan Park (in Colorado). To say I was fearful would be a huge understatement. I can give you a million things that I convinced myself that I should be afraid of (some rational and some not so much). But in hindsight, what I think that I was truly afraid of was no cell service AT ALL!! Not even a little...we are talking non-existent!! I mean I tried to tell myself that the break would be nice, but I wasn't sure if I truly believed that. And although I am not completely convinced that I would do it again, had I not gone, I would have missed seeing and living as part of God's creation in a way that I had NEVER experienced before.

We didn't use lights until evening and then we turned off the lights when we were not in a room. We unplugged appliances when they were not in use. The electricity and water we did have was dependent on solar panels and pumps. We composted. We experimented with worm composting. I held a worm in my hand.

We had no air conditioning or heat. We saw stars and roaring rivers and streams due to the harsh winter snow beginning to melt. (I had never in my life thought of why the water was rushing so fast.) We saw mountains and moose and elk and rabbits and stars. We learned about all types of trees and saw the resurrection of spring flowers despite the snow. And you know what the greatest sight of all that was? Our Youth seeing, and living, and playing in God's creation. Snowball fights, hikes and climbs and really cold water adventures and painting on the porch and playing board games and kickball, sleeping in tents and hammocks. Not only enjoying God's creation, but respecting it and loving it and not complaining for a second. No fear, just the wonder and joy of this most magnificent place.

As you listened to the Gospel reading this morning, I wonder if you found it strange to be hearing about the resurrection of Christ, during the Season of Creation. My brain is accustomed to reading these words during Easter only! But when I thought about what the word resurrection means: the revival of something...it started to make sense. I thought back to my time at Duncan Park, seeing the resurrection of spring flowers despite the snow. It reminded me of growing up in Chicago and how we longed for the Spring to come and we always knew it had arrived when the tulips would appear. We would be filled with so much joy! And as we hear this morning, our Lord Jesus Christ, resurrected in the midst of so much sadness and fear, he brought unspeakable joy!

In verse 1 we read that Mary Magdalene, with the other Mary (the mother of James and Joseph) were visiting the tomb of Jesus. Most likely hoping to finish preparing the body for burial. I imagine still very sad and grieving this loss.

We see in verse 2 that suddenly there was a great earthquake! A commentator described this powerful moment as: when the earth received Jesus, it shook in fear, and now that he arose, the earth that resigned him, leaped for joy. And the angel of the Lord appears. And if we think back, we know that angels always seem to be present at really important times: the birth of Jesus, in his temptation, in his agony and his resurrection.

This earthquake and appearance of an angel was so powerful, that we read that the guards fainted. (verse 4)

But then in verses 5-7, the angel speaks. And not only does the angel tell the women “Do not be afraid,” but the angel says “I know who you are looking for, and Jesus is not here. He has risen from the dead, just like he said would happen. Come and see! Oh, and by the way ladies, go tell the disciples that Jesus has risen and have them meet Jesus in Galilee.” Now the fact that the angel shared all of this news with these women, this may or may not seem like much for us today, but this is highly significant, that the empty tomb was discovered by women and that they were told to go and tell a group of men this news. The culture at this time, considered a woman’s witness worthless. But Jesus, he routinely went against the cultural norms to spread his message.

In Luke 24:11 we read that the women told the disciples, but the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it. But...in Luke 24:24 some of the men must have become curious because they ran out to see, and sure enough, Jesus’ body was gone, just as the women had said.

We learn in verses 8-10, that despite their fear, the women were moved to act. They were obedient to the angel’s commission to bear witness to others. The women were: urged to believe, urged to share and urged to rejoice. And rejoice they did. Grasping Jesus’ feet and worshipping him. And Jesus comforts them with the same words as the angel: “Do not be afraid.”

No fear, but power in the Resurrection! Once the women knew, even though they were fearful, they took off running. Fearful, yet joyful to share what they knew. Things that we don’t know or understand can bring fear and complacency, but there is power and hope and joy in a resurrected Jesus.

As is my story, when Mary Finucane announced last Sunday about Youth Climate strikes and encouraging our church to participate, sadly I had no clue what she was talking about. Then she came to my office later in the week and asked me to chat with our Youth to see if they would be joining her and other Reconcilers on Saturday (yesterday). Out of fear of feeling dumb, I figured, that I better look into what in the world a Youth Climate Strike even was. So, I turned to the all-knowing Google. And as I was searching and reading and listening, I came across a sign that teens were holding that had what appeared to be a cartoon picture of an orange walrus with a yellow mustache...and the sign read “no one is too small to make a difference.” The cartoon picture looked familiar, but for the life of me, I didn’t

know how. What I stumbled upon, will forever bring me power and hope and joy in this resurrection of my heart towards the Season of Creation.

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss , a story written in 1971, that if you didn't know better, you might think it was written in present day 2019. As a teacher and a mom, I will never know how this book has escaped my reading, but the cliff note version of the story is this: The Lorax tries warning another character by the name of the old Once-ler, that if you continue to cut down the Truffula Trees, the Brown Bar-baloots will have no shady place to play and no fruit to eat. The Lorax warns the Once-ler: "you are making so much smogulous smoke that my poor swoomee-swans why they can't sing a note." The Lorax continues with his warnings: "you're glumping the pond where the humming fish hummed and no more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed." And this final part of the story is what got me: the Lorax says "I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. I speak for the trees, which you seem to be chopping as fast as you please." And the Once-ler, although sad, replies...but business is business and business must grow. As if that wasn't piercing enough, the story ends with this: "Unless....unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better...it's just not!"

We need a resurrection....

This past Friday, 2,500 events were scheduled in over 150 countries, planned by teens. These Youth Climate Strikes were strategically planned 3 days before world leaders are set to gather at the United Nations for a much-anticipated climate summit. Demonstrations to demand action to prevent further global warming and climate change. And these strikes were inspired and gained momentum, all because "no one is too small to make a difference." Greta Thunberg, a 9th grader from Sweden, staged a protest in August 2018. She most recently traveled to New York by solar powered sailboat to attend a Youth Climate Strike and continues calling attention to the work needed to address the climate crisis.

As I watched You Tube clips from Fridays event in New York, the words of our Youth were real and authentic and convicting:

"My parents don't really know what is going on. So, teens are leading this because this is going to affect us the most in the future. This is our future!"

"I am here because we want adults to act. It is time to do something."

“The strike today is going to change the conversation at the United Nations Climate Summit. They have to listen to us now.”

Their signs read:

“Climate change is not a lie. We won’t let our planet die.”

“You know it’s time for change when the children act like leaders and the leaders act like children.”

“Change is coming whether they like it or not.”

“You will die of old age. Your kids will die of climate change.”

“We are living on this planet as if we have another.”

These youth have hope...hope in a resurrected Earth...in resurrected adults that will help them in their fight for their future. Because as one teen said, “Their complacency...our complacency...my complacency is literally killing them.”

These young protestors are part of a generation increasingly vocal in demanding that leaders take climate change more seriously. Because “unless....unless someone like you...like me...like them, cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better...it’s just not!”

We can no longer say that “business is business and business must grow,” because our Youth need more from us. In an open letter to “The Guardian,” our Youth write:

We, the young, are deeply concerned about our future. [...] We are the voiceless future of humanity. We will no longer accept this injustice. [...] We finally need to treat the climate crisis as a crisis. It is the biggest threat in human history and we will not accept the world's decision-makers' inaction that threatens our entire civilisation. [...] Climate change is already happening. People did die, are dying and will die because of it, but we can and will stop this madness. [...] United we will rise until we see climate justice. We demand the world's decision-makers take responsibility and solve this crisis. You have failed us in the past. If you continue failing us in the future, we, the young people, will make change happen by ourselves. The youth of this world has started to move and we will not rest again.

We need a resurrection! We need to believe, and to share and to rejoice and to move alongside of our Youth. No fear, but power! Remember, once the women at the tomb knew, even though they were fearful, they took off running; joyful to share what they knew. Matthew 28 ends with the Great Commission. To go and make disciples, to teach the disciples to obey all the commands and to remember that Christ is always with you! And no matter how fearful I might be, I will continue to repeat the word....unless!!