

EASTER SUNRISE MEDITATION
“Staying Power”
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St. John’s Chapel UCC

Luke 24: 1-12

As I’m sure you all know, there were more than 12 men following Jesus around. According to Luke, there were also “some women” from Galilee. (Luke 8: 2) Since the lectionary focus is on Luke this year, I thought it might be nice to take a look at Luke’s resurrection story for this service since the lectionary does not stick with Luke this Sunday, but recommends John’s Easter story, which I will be preaching on later this morning.

In Luke’s story of Easter, it is this same group of women who have been following Jesus since Galilee, “who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.”

They were there when Jesus first set his face to go to Jerusalem. When the twelve scattered at his arrest, they were there. When Joseph came to claim Jesus’ body for burial, they were there. They followed Joseph and saw the tomb where Jesus was laid. And they were there at early dawn to anoint Jesus’ body for burial. The staying power of these women, I suggest, we meditate on this morning.

Using the prayer style of Saint Ignatius, we will envision the difference between rock solid faith that cannot be held back, versus lukewarm faiths that folds at the first sign of trouble or inconvenience.

St. Ignatius’ prayer style consists of replaying in one’s mind and heart, an episode from the Bible. The idea behind the technique is to relive the event being described. You don’t stand

outside the event as an observer. You enter into it as an active participant. You immerse yourself in what is happening, experiencing it---in all its detail--with all five senses.

We will use Ignatius's prayer style as a means of uncovering where we stand in our faith development. Where is our staying power when we compare it to the women from Galilee?

Allow yourself to get comfortable and relax. Adopt a let-it-happen, passive attitude, and let relaxation occur at its own pace. Lightly close your eyes. Uncross your arms, legs, and hands. Take a deep breath and relax. Scan over your body. As you scan, note any tight muscles and allow them to relax (pause). Take another deep breath all the way to the tip of your toes and relax even further. Listen to the sounds around you. Let them penetrate your being—freely and deeply. Sounds distract us when we try to fight them. Let the sounds happen and become enjoyable.

With your body relaxed, your mind is free to roam in time and space building mental images.

Jesus, our savior, we believe that you are present with us this Easter morn as we follow a group of women to the site of your burial. Uncover for us where we are in our “staying power,” in our ability to stick by you no matter what—and show us ways and means toward “following you more nearly.”

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, you walk to the tomb were Jesus was buried. *Notice the world through which you walk. Are there birds singing? Is it warm or cold? Is there dew on the ground? Are you on a dirt road or walking through a meadow?* You come to the tomb with the spices you prepared with the other women. You find that the stone has been rolled away from the tomb, but as you go into the tomb you do not find a body. While you stand there perplexed, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stand beside you. Most of the women are

terrified, *are you? What do you do at this point? Did you even enter the tomb?* (pause) Most of the women bow their faces to the ground. *Do you?* The men say to all of you, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Upon hearing this you remember Jesus’ words.

You walk back from the tomb. Upon returning, the women tell all that they have seen and heard to the eleven and others. *Who will you tell today? Do you know anyone who has not heard the resurrection story, or does not believe it? Have you ever asked anyone at work or within your social circle whether they consider themselves a Christian? Is there anyone in your family who does not believe the Easter story? Have you ever shared with them your experiences of resurrection? Have you ever had a resurrection experience--a time when you felt dead, when life had drained out of you due to a lost or missed opportunity—and God interceded to lift you up and show you the way back to life?*

Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary-the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to the apostles an idle tale. They did not believe them. *Have you ever shared your faith story to only have someone look at you as if you must be crazy? Or even tell you they did not believe you? Did this effect whether you ever told someone again?*

Peter got up and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves, and then he went home, amazed at what had happened. *Have you ever heard someone else’s faith story and not believed it. Do you need firsthand experience in order to believe?*

Now I am going to count slowly from one to five. At the count of five, take a deep breath. On the inhale say, “Mind alert, wide awake and open your eyes.” On the exhale say, “Relaxed and refreshed.” One coming up two, three, four, five. Breath in deeply. Say to yourself, “Mind alert, wide awake and open your eyes. Exhale saying, “Relaxed and refreshed.”

Take the time to write a note to yourself about what you would like to carry with you throughout this day or even week. There is space provided in your bulletin. Then turn to someone and share anything you discovered.

I would love the opportunity to share with each of you, your experience or additional questions you had on your journey. Please seek me out during breakfast if you would like to talk.