

"Mary"

Grove Presbyterian Church
2 August 2009

So goes the story of the first creation. Of 'a'dam,' not a name, but the Hebrew word for humanity. Deep mystery. Humanity separated into equal genders.

Now listen to the story of the new creation, the next Genesis of all things. For John understands how Jesus' resurrection is the beginning a new humanity no longer fearful, no longer captive to ourselves. The old is gone, the new is come. For anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

Listen especially to John's symbolism: John 20: 11-18

A tomb in the garden? Why not?

And the other word for garden is paradise. John paints for us the picture of the new Eden. It is painted for us too in the window at the back of the sanctuary. Our Bloom Street stained glass window.

We see Mary there. Mary Magdalene. Not momma Jesus. Mary mother of Jesus is fairly insignificant throughout the Gospels. But Magdalene, she's special. The first there. She who loves Jesus more than his other apostles. Mary feels lost, looking for her partner in ministry, her friend, but he is gone. She feels incomplete.

As a friend said about the death of his wife: "I am homeless. I have a house now, but no longer a home."

*When I remember all
The friends, so link'd together,
I've seen around me fall
Live leaves in wintry weather;
I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted.*

--Thomas Moore, "Oft in the Stilly Night"

Why do you weep? Well, now, we sure have reason enough.

Why do you suppose Mary thinks Jesus is the gardener? What was Adam's job in the first garden? To till it, cultivate it. Adam was a gardener. Thus we hear Jesus is become the new Adam and it is a new garden. Where our tombs are the flower beds of paradise.

Why are you weeping? Let me count the ways. Tombs of fear. Loneliness. Age itself. Distrust or broken trust. Tombs of dreams lost. Loved ones gone, either by sad decisions or death -- the memory of their voices melting away, like a dream you try to remember when you wake up or like sugar spooned into tea.

Yet Mary is there, in the garden. Come to the garden alone. Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?

There is something renewing about gardens. A cultivated boast of promise. How despite the flourish and fading, there may be, from barren soil, nectar for butterflies and beauty for the soul. For Mary is our new Eve, first-born of the resurrection.

Though she is first gently chided. There is more, far more, than what we used to see. Our tombs are the flower beds of paradise. When resurrection is needed most, and most unexpected. Out of our losses, our failures, our hurts, our tears, our fears --- there, when God gardens, the seeds of new life and new beginnings best take root, cultivating and bringing the new to bloom in you.

This isn't a tomb any longer, something here is new for you.

Interesting choice: to weep among tombs or hope and love in a garden.

Because she will hear how she cannot cling to the old but she can receive the new.