

Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Sunday Morning Service, Easter
April 17, 2022
The Rev Dr Scott Couper
“Easter Changed Everything”
Luke 24:1-12

Easter changed everything then and, therefore, Easter changes everything today!

On Friday, only three days ago, all was lost. The teacher and healer, killed. His mother, inconsolable as she watched the execution. Two criminals on either side of the rabbi, also dead. Judas, committed suicide. Peter, horrified at his own predicted denial. Mary Magdalene, her future without devotion. The disciples, scattered, hiding in closed rooms with doors locked also awaited their dreaded fate. The wives and families of the disciples in Galilee, destitute without their breadwinners – and all for a lost cause. For so many, there was no more tomorrow.

I remember when my father transformed. I remained alone in room with him after he died. A dark pall was my atmosphere. I remember feeling a great emptiness – a profound void with a touch of ache. I was dazed – definitely not thinking clearly. I felt strangely removed from reality. All seemed dreamlike, as if reality itself was distant. My father was a seaman,

so I will use nautical terms: the day my father died, I lost my 'mooring'. I was adrift. Since I arrived to visit and care for him, my father had been by 'bearing', my daily purpose. That daily 'bearing' evaporated. The morning of his death, I had no direction, no purpose, no reason to communicate, and no reason to even function really.

In the days after his death, I distinctly recall feeling somewhat relieved that I had a few pathetic things to do. I had to sign some papers. His clothes, watch, rings, phone, and wallet had to be brought home. That was real. I had to shower. The water was in fact wet. Breakfast. I could eat breakfast. I remember being comforted by the smallest tasks, by the simplest of errands. It was the semblance of routine that kept me from forgetting who I was.

The women who came to Jesus' tomb also found some solace in their tradition, in a routine and habit. They did that which women often do, the right and the hard things. They prepared Jesus' body for burial. So, to the tomb they went. And Easter changed everything.

As a historian, I thought this morning, in the interests of biblical accuracy, all the preaching about the resurrection today should be done by women! But this morning, it was too late for me to get any women from our

church to preach instead of me. Yes, our scripture tells us that “when they came back from the tomb, they told all these things [John read for us] to the Eleven and to all the others. [...] But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense” (Luke 24:9 and 11). Yet the men verified what they were told. Eventually, even for the men, Easter changed everything.

The women and men who were Jesus’ first disciples found their moorings. They began again to follow their bearings. Their lives had purpose, and not just purpose, passion! All that had been taught was still remembered. Only that which would not be implemented could be lost. Easter changed everything. Nothing remained routine. Nothing further would be procedural. Even if half of what they did failed, the other half would benefit us even two-thousand years later. Easter changed everything!

We all have been battered and bruised by death, depression, COVID, divorce, illness, inflation, our march toward climate devastation, and even yes, the specter of nuclear war arising from the conflict in eastern Europe. There are days when the the tedium of routine is the only relief from the wounds of life. Yet, Easter changes everything.

In my message three days ago on Good Friday in Dummerston, I referenced Bob Marley's "Redemption Song". There is a lyric that he wrote with which I have struggled all weekend. Marley sang, "Have no fear for atomic energy, 'Cause none of them-a-can-a-stop-a the time". I am aware of the nuclear waste stored at Yankee Power. I am aware of the cost and threat of nuclear weapons in eastern Europe and our inability to store decommissioned waste (both civilian and military). How could Marley 'pooh-pooh' the existential threats of the atom's power?! Yet when I read this morning the scripture John just shared with us, I realized that Marley was telling us that all technological advances, and even the consequential man-made disasters that they can bring, "pale in comparison" to the cosmic truth" of Easter.¹ Death is conquered. Easter changed everything!

This was the word of God. And it was preached to the people of God.

And the people of God responded, "Amen".

¹ Jim Beviglia, "Behind the Song: Bob Marley, 'Redemption' Song", *American Songwriter, Legends*, January/February 2019. Found at: <https://americansongwriter.com/behind-song-bob-marley-redemption-song/>, accessed April 15, 2022.