

Pastor Roy's sermon from April 1, 2018 (Easter)

When we say, "He is risen." "He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!" What does that mean to you? Perhaps that the women and disciples come to the tomb, find it empty, and by the end of the day most of them believe and understand perfectly that Jesus is alive in a way that no one else had ever attained after dying: a miracle from God and sign of what is to come for those who follow Christ. Christ is faithful, and God raises him from the dead and Jesus' followers understand it perfectly from the start.

But that isn't what Mark says in his Gospel! As he tells it, the women walk away from the tomb after being told to go tell the disciples to go to Galilee to meet Jesus who has been raised, who is no longer dead. They don't tell them, they are afraid and terrified, bewildered. They have never before experienced anything like this and don't know what to say or do. They have to take it all in, listen, pray, wonder. They must meet the Lord themselves—hear him call their name. They must make these strange happenings part of their own personal story. That will take time.

Recently, during my mother's funeral, I was surprised at how foreign the events at the cemetery felt. I have presided at many funerals. I know what to do and I usually appreciate the sense of closure that comes at the cemetery. But this was all a blur. There was little sense that there could be closure, that only with the passing of time will final meaning and acceptance be possible.

There are different levels of consciousness in our bodies and brains. The most simple, non-verbal levels are primary, deep, and slow to acknowledge change or loss. Time is needed. Such memory resists change, despite our attempts to convince ourselves otherwise.

So it was with the women. So it was with the disciples. The books of the New Testament were written close to a generation after the events at the cross and the tomb. That generation remembered it all by word of mouth until it was later written down. I imagine that is why the different Gospel writers and apostles emphasize different things and tell their stories differently. Isn't that how memory works? Isn't that how we tell the stories about which we feel strongly? Meaning comes first, then language and words.

When folks ask me how I am doing after the death of my mother, I'm never quite sure what to say, besides "I'm ok, Thank you." Words beyond that have not yet come, as hard as I try. Only the passing of years will allow me to verbalize to myself and to others this loss. I imagine you have had a similar experience.

Therefore, it should not surprise us when we find it difficult to talk about Christ's resurrection. The 7 weeks of Easter are an invitation to sit with that uncertainty, that growing edge of our faith, in prayer. To let it all gently sink in. So spend some time with the risen Lord who does not speak to us with words. Invite the Spirit of Christ to dwell deeply within you. Courage and patience be with you as you do so. Thanks be to God. Amen.