

YOUR FULL NAME || Spiritual Practice

Easter

This past week, holy week, felt dark and also comforting to me.

Somehow I didn't feel as alone, walking into these days that feel so strange, unreal, eerie... knowing that the saints before me have gone this way too. These days are an odd combination - so many familiar things - my surroundings; home, family, work, pets... but there's a whole new paradigm of operating, of living. And I find myself grasping to see Jesus wherever I can, finding him sometimes in the ways I'm used to, the familiar ways - and also stretching to encounter him in spots where I never realized he's been.

I believe these days are asking us to seek and find Jesus in new ways. Not because he's not where He's always been - but because we will need him to be in all the places we haven't yet found him to be, as well.

My favorite Easter sermon is by Mary Magdalene, found in the gospel of John. I love that a woman got to be the one to spread the news of the resurrection, that indeed Jesus was alive! It's a powerful sermon and here's how it goes:

Mary loves Jesus.

Jesus dies.

Mary goes back to the place where she last knew Jesus to be.

Mary doesn't find Jesus where she thinks he'll be. In fact she can't find him.

She cries - and weeps - and feels lost and afraid.

And then Jesus starts talking to her, "Why are you crying?" "Who are you looking for?" And she doesn't recognize that this is Jesus, she thinks he's a gardener.

And then Jesus says her name, "Mary."

As he says her name, she turns to him and sees him as Jesus, and she says "Rabboni - Teacher!"

And Mary goes out and shares her sermon with confidence, "I have seen the Lord!"

And Mary loves Jesus.

And so the story of the resurrection goes... as I read it.

It starts and ends with Mary loving Jesus.

And Every. Moment. In-Between. Is of course an expression of this deep love.

The moments, like us when we rush to find Jesus in our despair, where we go to find him where he should be, where we last knew him to be. But we can't find him! When we are perplexed. WHERE we fall to our knees in exhaustion. Where we cry, huge heaping sobs, and say "this is toooooo hard!" And where we ask bold, true questions like "where are you JESUS?" Where we

shout, “YOU SHOULD BE HERE!”

Mary’s story is our story too, a “human account of being wounded and resurrected at the same time.” (Richard Rohr).

And Easter is an invitation to not only celebrate that Jesus has risen, but because he has risen **HE IS ALIVE TO YOU**. Specifically to you. Because this is what Mary shows us, that she wasn’t just a bystander to the resurrection of Jesus, but she herself becomes an **active bearer of the resurrection**.

The luster, the shine to resurrection, is that we are invited to find Jesus in the parts of our lives, where we haven’t recognized him before....and this is crucial, as Mary shows us - because life can switch on a dime.

Resurrection asks us to keep looking for life, to keep showing up again and again, and to trust that loving Jesusa Jesus that some days we can’t seem to recognize, hear, or see, or feel **is worth it**.

To trust that Jesus in *that* love, will invite us:

To encounter him at the edges of our lives, even when it shudders of death.

To find him in the strong, spring wind - that’s lined with both coldness and promise.

To find him in the twists and turns of the braids you might weave in your daughter’s hair.

To find him In the early morning call of a bird.

To find him in the moments of fighting or arguing or side-eyeing.

In the small teddy bear in someone’s window.

In a spitting snow squall in April, as you wait outside in a long line to the grocery store.

In the deep wrinkle near your neighbor’s eye, that you notice above her mask-line, that suddenly strikes you as holy kindness.

In the new ideas that come to you - the poster’s you’ll make and walk along your sidewalks with joy and hope.

Your old guitar that you fumble anew.

In *that specific* tree.

The way you start to find puzzles modestly tolerable.

.. in the gray, icy skies.

.. in the blue, blindingly bright skies...

To find Jeus in the stillness... the chilling and calming stillness.

To notice. To show up. To keep loving this wild Jesus of ours.

This is to be resurrection bearers. To be invited into an upending, disruptive, shaking story - one that calls each of us as if by NAME to declare that yes, “we have seen the Lord,” that **Jesus is here**.

YOUR FULL NAME || PRACTICE

Here’s a quick practice to fully embrace your “inner Mary Magdalene” - your FULL NAME as a resurrection bearer. I’ll walk us through how to build our FULL NAMES. Use this as a way to remember your name, that Jesus calls again and again in the most familiar ways and wild ways.

- 1) Say your first name, “**Ivy.**”

- 2) Bring to mind an encounter with God you had this week (recently).
What did God give to you in this encounter? Try to get it to one word, or a short phrase.
(Examples: **courage**, compassion, tenderness, joy, etc...)
 - a) Use this word as the prefix to your name. So now you have, **“Courage, Ivy.”**
- 3) Lastly, remember the declaration of resurrection Mary Magdalene made, “I have seen the Lord” and Jesus’ resurrection promise that He declares to us each day, “I AM here.”
 - a) Use this phrase, “I AM here”, as your last name.
- 4) Put your full name together: **“Courage, Ivy. I AM here.”**
- 5) Repeat as necessary, to remember that you hold the power of the resurrection within you, every time you encounter Jesus and act on the word He gives you.

May this be your resurrection bearer NAME. Use it to continue the resurrection miracle today - to be the active participant who finds love in the face of hate.. To find courage in the face of fear, to find peace in the time of turmoil, to find our breath when our endurance is gone... to find light, when there is only darkness... to find life when death invades. To keep finding Jesus.

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And this is the story of us.

The story of Mary.

The story of Jesus.

This is the resurrection STORY, bookended with LOVE.

The story of Easter - not only for today, but for every day.

PRAYER:**

THANK You JESUS - that you call us by name. That you persist in creating, catching our attention in the wildest of spots, for our wildest of times... THANK YOU For being relentless in your love for us - REMINDING us that you are indeed, ALIVE.