

“An Expansive Life” by Pastor Leah Rosso  
Luke 24: 1-12; Philippians 2  
Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

In his book, *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer shares his experience of severe depression that he experienced when he was in his 40's. Being a Quaker theologian, leader of the church, author of books on faith, he felt that he shouldn't be having this experience— that the holy life brings you higher and higher up a mountain, not down into a pit of what he perceived as hell. And so he didn't get help at first, he just suffered. Parker says even to talk about it now, all these years later, he gets concerned talking about it because he knows there are lots of types of depression and lots of answers that are different for different people. But for him, both with medication and therapy, Palmer began to try to deal with his depression not as an enemy within, but more like a friend trying to help him find his way. The experience made him realize how disembodied his faith had become— always intellectualizing God, pushing God to be outside of himself. He felt totally isolated and alone. But in remembering what Paul Tillich wrote in the early 20th Century, that God is the ground of being, Palmer began to look for himself and look for God in the darkness of his depression— not seeking answers, because he was too depressed to think about answers— but rather to sit in the mystery. Sometimes Palmer found himself needing to literally put his hands in dirt to feel the ground; and slowly he began to find his way. Palmer readily admits he doesn't know why he got to come out of his depression while so many others have not been able to, but he knows that he began to be able to make his way out when he befriended the inner most part of himself. He began to remember in a very physical way that God is embodied in this world. Slowly but surely he began to let go of the pieces of his life that were not life giving, and found his way back to himself and to God by listening to the depth of his soul: literally re-mem-bering — putting back together the pieces of who he is in a way that helped him feel connected to God and humanity again.

In our Gospel story of this Easter morning, the terror of Friday's violence is still very much in the bodies of the women as they walk to the tomb with their spices. They are longing to anoint Jesus' body, to offer dignity and whatever healing they can to an awful situation. And when they get there, and find the body is not there, they run into two angels instead who ask them, “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? Don't you remember what Jesus told you?” And so the women, in their confusion and fear, and now in their surprise, begin the journey of piecing together what they know, what Jesus showed them, what is living within their souls— what they remember.

The Greek term for “remember” that is used here is *mimnesko*, which means more than just mere recollection; it means to look at all the evidence, to call back what was

known in the past and then let it read the present. It's the same word Mary sings when she is pregnant with Jesus, remembering all that God has already done in this world. It is a remembering that is not just intellectual, but embodied— an action. And it becomes the women's proclamation. Somehow, even in their fear, they find that they do remember. They do put the pieces together— probably not yet knowing what resurrection means, but putting enough of it together to know that God has done something amazing; something in line with who God is— and so they run back and tell the others. And Peter, not knowing what to think of all of this, knowing in his head that none of it makes sense, but perhaps knowing in his heart that there is a truth truer than death— Peter runs to the tomb to look. He too wants to remember!

All of these years later, no one can explain resurrection. Jesus' friends didn't understand it in the moment, and thankfully the church as a whole has never tried to vote on exactly what happened. It's a mystery, and like a lot of good things in this life, best to be left as a mystery. But what is most certainly true, and often overlooked, is that resurrection didn't make everything go back to the way it had been. Resurrection doesn't take away the horror of the week or the suffering that happened before it. It doesn't take away the suffering that the disciples will endure in the days ahead. This is vitally important in our life of faith, all these years later, because we still get confused sometimes and think that believing in God is supposed to keep us from pain. But when Jesus shows up, after the resurrection, one of the first things he does so that his friends will recognize him, is he shows them his hands and his feet— he shows them his suffering and his wounds— he doesn't shy away from it or pretend it didn't happen. He doesn't ignore Peter's shame of having denied he knew him. He acknowledges the fear, the violence of this world, and what our participation in it does to us, and then Jesus offers forgiveness and peace and love and hope which leads to healing.

This is why our theme for Lent and now Easter is "Full to the Brim"— because despite the world's insistence that there is never enough, that we should just look after our own skin, God keeps reminding us in the stories of our faith and in the stories of our lives, that God's grace is full to the brim, even when we are not. Before Lent began, we talked to the Visuals team about what to have on the altar and around the building. And because the theme is "Full to the Brim" we wanted to have some vessels around — we had the burlap bags that held our prayers in the entryway and the beautiful purple vase that stood at the foot of the cross, and then we agreed that we wanted one broken vessel— because all of us were feeling a bit broken and our world feels broken and we wanted something to acknowledge that. A couple of weeks ago, Karel, who had brought us the broken pot, then offered to put it back together— not seamlessly, as we so often want our lives to look as we put them back together, but rather using a method called kintsugi. Kintsugi is a Japanese method of highlighting rather than obscuring the cracks— acknowledging the stories of brokenness and pain

— and then making them beautiful by filling them with gold. You can see it on our pot here, and you're welcome to see it up close later. What Karel did, when she filled in the cracks with gold, when she re-membered this pot, was symbolically what God does for us all the time— filling in our brokenness not so that we can pretend we are perfect, but so that we can experience new life, wisdom, and compassion by letting Christ fill our brokenness.

How tempted we are, as people of faith, to trade in our God — our God of love who came in our flesh to free us for an expansive life— we are so tempted to trade this God of love in for a different Messiah that will offer us wealth and ease and no more pain. But we will find time and again, that those messiahs, those saviors are just smoke and mirrors. How tempted we are, as people of faith, to trade in our world for the next one— to focus entirely on what is to come— and then miss out on working as God's partner people to call this world good; to delight in all that God has created here. How tempted we are, as people of faith, to look at our neighbor and not recognize Christ. To turn one another into enemies when God has given us each other as a gift.

The resurrection speaks to us about what God is doing all of the time— taking our brokenness and turning it into healing; taking our mourning and turning it into dancing; taking our fear and healing us into a place of love. God keeps recycling— keeps creating life out of dust— keeps inviting us to be part of the way of love that leads us through pain and into healing and forgiveness — to remember our true selves connected to one another. God has been here, from the beginning, grounding us in love and peace. Giving us a place to stand, to remember, and to love. In all of your brokenness, God is offering you resurrection and life. In all of our brokenness, Christ invites us to be his body in the world. May we open ourselves to that amazing grace and re-member who God is and who we are.