

Yr. C, Easter Sunday  
April 17, 2022  
Preached by the Rev. Furman Buchanan  
St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
1105 Words

Lessons: Acts 10:34-43  
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:19-26  
John 20:1-18

Maybe. Good things *often* begin with just a ‘maybe.’

When all the other disciples were *certain* there was nothing they could do but hide out, Mary Magdalene was willing to take a chance on ‘*maybe*.’ I’m not even talking about the resurrection of Jesus—not yet.

The first ‘maybe’ came to her mind when it was still dark—early, early on the first day of the week. It was *certainly* dangerous for anyone who had been associated with Jesus to show up anywhere near his tomb. You see, when it came to troublemakers, like Jesus and his friends; the Roman philosophy was simple: Crucify first. Ask questions later.

“But...*maybe* I could get to his body,” Mary thought to herself. “*Maybe* one of those soldiers will take pity on me and let me deliver these spices to my Lord’s tomb.” Mary Magdalene’s devotion to Jesus was so deep...so strong...that her mind was free enough to believe that ‘*maybe*...maybe I can do this.’

What about *us*? Do you think we can...*maybe*...do something with our devotion to Jesus? Something really generous? Something really challenging? Something faithful...or hopeful...or loving? What could we *maybe do* that would be a blessing to others in Christ’s name?

Forty-one days ago I stood right over there and reminded you that “the first Christians observed with *great devotion* the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection,” and *then*...I invited *you* to the observance of a holy Lent.

The reason we dedicate a whole, 40-day *season* to “self-examination and repentance; to prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and to reading and meditating on God’s holy Word”...it’s because it takes a lot of effort to pry our minds loose from the *certainty* that there’s nothing more we can *do* than whatever we’re used to doing. It may take *even more effort* to pry our minds loose from the *certainty* that there’s nothing more *God might be able to do* in our lives.

We seem to be wired to favor what is ‘familiar’ over what *might be possible*. We seem wired to prefer stability over transformation. We’re inclined to choose the routine over the resurrection.

Now look, I know that Lent may not be long enough to get us fully on board with an enthusiastic ‘Yes!’ That’s *okay*, because Mary Magdalene shows us that a ‘maybe’ is good enough. God *knows* how to work with ‘maybe.’

‘Maybe’ is enough to ever so slightly open our hearts and our minds. ‘Maybe’ is *enough* to get us on our feet. ‘Maybe’ is enough to get us moving toward Jesus...and his *next*, surprising, life-giving transformation in our midst.

Oh, but the setbacks. They flip our minds back to *certainty* so quickly.

When Mary Magdalene saw the large stone had been removed from Jesus’ tomb, she was just *certain* that the Romans had stolen his body. So she immediately ran away.

That's what 'certainty' does for us. Certainty slams our minds shut to other possibilities, including *better* possibilities...more *faithful* possibilities...more *hopeful* possibilities...and more *loving* possibilities. Mary Magdalene never even paused to consider that...*maybe*...God was already doing a new thing in her midst...a *better* thing than she would even *dare* to ask or imagine.

We do the very same thing. We let our certainties shut our minds to what God may *already be doing* in our midst. Certainty may just be your biggest obstacle when it comes to trusting God with your precious life.

Remember—the opposite of faith is not *doubt*; it's *certainty*...the kind of certainty that shuts our minds...the kind of certainty that stokes our fears...and propels us to cling even more *tightly* to what is familiar or comfortable, even though God's transformational life and promise are *still* unfolding in our midst.

When Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb with Simon Peter and the other disciple, she was *just certain* that something bad had happened. She stood there, weeping outside the tomb, *certain* that Jesus' body had been stolen.

She bent down, looked in, saw two angels in white, and was *still certain* that the Romans had taken away her Lord.

Then Mary turned around, saw *Jesus, himself*, standing there...and she was *still certain* that his body was missing.

Y'all, this is actually pretty funny—*embarrassingly funny*—and we're supposed to laugh out loud at this scene...except for the fact that...we recognize Mary's certainty...her fears...her clinging ever so tightly to an expectation of the worst possible thing. She is...*just like us*.

And Jesus—*sneaky as ever*—is standing there in broad daylight, looking like the gardener...looking like a day-laborer. And he is letting her weep.

Jesus lets Mary cleanse her eyes and her heart. He allows the tightness of her grip on certainty, fear, and dread to melt away, and *then* he calls her by name, "Mary!"

Maybe—maybe was all it took to bring Mary Magdalene face to face with our risen Lord.

Despite all the other setbacks of that first Easter morning, Mary's devotion to Jesus was enough...enough to give her eyes to see and ears to hear the Good News of what God was *already doing* in her midst—the Good News of Resurrection Life!

What if God is—*maybe...just maybe*—doing a new thing in *our midst*?"

Are we able to see it? Are we *willing* to see it? Which old certainties do we need to let go of? Which *fears* do we need to let go of?

If we cannot bring ourselves to an enthusiastic 'Yes!' just yet, how do we...at least...open our hearts and our minds to 'maybe.' God knows how to work with 'maybe.' God knows how to call us *through our tears*...and through our worst fears into new life—transformed, resurrection life!

Dear people, resurrection life is not just for the dead. It's also for the living! Christ was risen *on earth*, not in heaven. Jesus Christ—*sneaky as ever*—appeared to the living, beginning with Mary Magdalene...the *one person* who woke up early on Easter morning and thought to herself, "Maybe...maybe I could do this for my Lord."

I believe that Jesus is *still calling* devoted people—people like you...and me—to see, to hear, and to *join* the transformational things that God is *already doing* in our midst.

Of course it's not altogether clear! It wasn't clear on the first Easter morning. *Of course* there are setbacks! Just like there were setbacks on the first Easter morning.

The Good News is this: The only thing it takes to begin...is a willingness to believe...*maybe*. "Maybe, I could do this for my Lord."

That's how we'll know that its time to proclaim: "Alleluia! Christ is risen! *The Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia!*"

Amen.