

Year C, Easter, 3/31/2013  
Hallelujah  
Hope Central Church  
Rev. Laura Ruth Jarrett

Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Love died and lay in the earth for 3 days, and we forgot that Love's hallelujah is our life's breath and connection to God. We thought it existed no more because we could not feel it in our hearts or in our minds or in our guts. So we turned to darkness, to our own darkness.

It is not that darkness is bad, for darkness is a place where we can choose to go while we don't know what to do, while we wait to be able to draw our next breath.

Sometimes going to darkness is a good but extraordinary step.

Sometimes darkness comes to us unbidden, unable to be moved until its time is run.

Sometimes there in darkness we are able to perceive the root of life that did not die.

Sometimes in darkness, we can lie fallow until we are reconstructed. And all the while, in that darkness, the Hallelujah hums in the earth like electricity waiting for our resurrection.

Sometimes, when we are entombed and our lips can make no hallelujah, the people whisper “hallelujah” for us.

After catastrophe, after the death of our brother, our son, our beloved ones, after bankruptcy, after cancer, after hospitalization, after a fall off the wagon, after divorce, after mayhem, it seems impossible the “hallelujah” could go on.

So it was for the women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and the other women with them. They went to the tomb of Jesus and found no dead body to anoint. There were two glorious beings who asked them, “Why do you look for the Hallelujah among the dead? And the women remembering Jesus teaching went to tell the others, who also could not believe the Hallelujah had not died, and so they went to see, too, and they were amazed.” Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

There is another kind of darkness that comes in ordinary life from the clutter of busyness and numbness we have installed, the drink, the food, the minute and exacting practice of controlling other people and minding their business, of fueling our fear, of setting up and living in imaginary categories: right or wrong, good or bad, victor or victim, dirty or pure, black or white, shame or shamer. We have become exquisitely invulnerable to the Hallelujah that sings through the trees, and causes them to clap their hands.

Some of us hardened our hearts because we thought that being vulnerable to the Hallelujah made us weak, invited ourselves to ridicule or the slaughter, made us victim. We thought we were protecting ourselves by cultivating invulnerability, but what also happened was, we cut ourselves off from the Hallelujah, but the Hallelujah was swimming in the ocean and causing the earth to be filled with the glory of God.

I’m not talking about the kind of vulnerability that tells too much of its story, or baits the people for attention. I’m talking about the kind of vulnerability that is resilient to shame, that is willing to be uncomfortable, that teaches that though we sometimes do wrong things, we ourselves are not wrong.

Madeline L’Engle wrote, “When we were children, we used to think that when we were grown up we would no longer be vulnerable. But to grow up is to accept vulnerability. To be alive is to be vulnerable.” Vulnerable to the Hallelujah.

We find it so hard to remember the Hallelujah that runs through our veins. I heard a story on the radio two weeks ago about a woman who has a neurological disorder, I don’t know how or why it happened, but every 90 seconds, her memory is reset and when it is reset, she begins the same conversation over and over. The content of the conversation is always the same, the conversation ends

in the same place. I am like her, stuck in my story, I do the same things over and over, rest too little, drink too much, watch too much TV. I think I am protecting myself from exquisite sensibilities but what I'm doing also is making myself invulnerable to the exquisite Hallelujah. But it is the Hallelujah that I want.

I know I'm not alone. I know you, too find it hard to believe there is something so spiritually compelling that you might give your life to it, a spiritual purpose unique to you on behalf of your communities, that you would gladly give your life for it. It maybe that you, like me, forget every 90 seconds that what you most want is to begin again, to say over and over, Hallelujah, anyway.

It is true that we live on the edge with a little welfare check, and that our food stamps run out before the month is over, but the Hallelujah does not run out.

It is true that we live with the worry that the interest on our investments will not cover our monthly expenses, but the Hallelujah covers them.

It is true that we wake from night terrors, that old memories intrude in our waking lives. It is true that the bottle calls us, still after years of sobriety. But the Hallelujah is strong.

It is true that we have grown old, that we are not as strong as we once were, and no one remembers that we were once fiery preachers, loving, providing husbands, and we are no more what we once were.

It is true that by choice or by age we are more like women or more like men than we once were, and through all this transition, still, the Hallelujah plays in us like a drum, like a heart beat.

We are no longer what we once were, because we are what we are becoming – following the Hallelujah into the heart of God.

Hallelujah is in our DNA and in the cosmos. Hallelujah is in the rocks, and if we failed to sing the Hallelujah the rocks themselves would start to sing Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, Glory to God in the highest.

I'm so aware that our church building is covered with bricks which are a kind of stone, and that our building shouts Hallelujah, that the sidewalks in Cambridge are covered in bricks, and that there are stones foundations under our schools and houses, and the curbstones in Boston are all shouting Hallelujah.

Glory, Glory, Glory, the people sing. Christ has risen and we like Christ are gloriously alive.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah.