

## “A Good Enough Faith”

*John 20: 1-18*

“Happy Easter!” Let us share a traditional Easter greeting. “Christ has risen.” “He has risen indeed!” Easter is a day that we proclaim that Christ overcomes death. It is a day we proclaim hope over despair and life over death. However, the Christian story of resurrection is not a typical fairytale story of “they lived happily ever after.” Even after this Easter, we will sometimes experience little deaths throughout lives and maybe meet death one day. However, our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ boldly invites us and courageously embraces “the chronic nature of being incurably human” because our Christ, the Good Gardener, will always tend us throughout our life journey.

In today’s scripture reading, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and discovered the empty tomb. While Peter and another disciple saw it and returned to their place, Mary Magdalene in her grief, remained there, weeping. And Jesus came to Mary and asked, “Woman, why are you weeping?” Mary replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” An interesting point is that Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener and begs him to tell her where Jesus’s body lies. In her book, “Good Enough,” Dr. Kate beautifully explicates the possible implications of the gardener.

Quote: “What a strange detail: The resurrected Christ is mistaken for a gardener. Maybe it’s because he stole the gardener’s clothes, since his were stripped and gambled over. Maybe because where Jesus was crucified was a garden. A tiny, beautiful detail that reminds us that death is never too far from new life. Maybe Jesus looks like his dad, the first gardener, who tended Eden barefoot. Maybe Jesus looks like the new Adam, the head gardener for the new Eden of the new heaven and new earth. Maybe it’s because he carries the pruning shears of a vinedresser, the careful tender of our souls, ready to pluck and plant, uproot and cut back. Maybe he looks ready to cultivate new life, to pull us toward resurrection with his fingers digging in among the worms. Or maybe this gardener looks like he knows something about hope-hope that Mary desperately needs.” (228)

We will never know why Mary mistook Jesus as the gardener but we can say, “Yes. Jesus Christ is the divine gardener for us.” We know that our good Gardener will continue to tend us so that we can continue to grow and bear fruit in God’s timing. A clergy friend of mine posted a picture of the cherry tree in her backyard, blooming. In past years, this cherry tree had very few flowers and leaves, making her wonder if the tree was dead. The little leaves and flowers and bare branches made it look unattractive all the time. But this year, as the third spring approached, the cherry tree fully and beautifully bloomed for the first time and made her feel as if she received an unexpected gift. She wrote, “Isn’t it amazing how creatures grow so beautifully in accordance with God’s timing, rather than our own expectations! It makes me reflect on things I let go of too quickly, things I judged too harshly, and the hope I abandoned too soon. All of nature surrounding us is truly a reminder of God’s grace.” Even after this Easter, things will not always go as we plan and hope. Sometimes, we will feel that we are like the unattractive barren tree with few leaves and flowers, but don’t forget that our Good Gardener is still tending us and caring for us.

I believe you have received a heart-shaped seed paper this morning. We ask that you plant it in your garden or a pot. To plant a seed, we need a kind of hope, seeing and expecting new life from the seemingly dead seed. Without it, no one would ever plant seed in the ground. Just as “all gardening requires a certain kind of hope, envisioning new life in the midst of despair and death,” our divine Gardener never abandons hope in us. That hope is the unshakable foundation of our hope! My Asbury family. God’s hope is still in you and our divine Gardener who is raised from the dead will continue to care and tend us to grow. So, let us give thanks to God. Christ has risen! He has risen indeed! Amen.