

“Easter Reframes Everything”

John 20:1-18, Isaiah 42:3 & Matthew 12:20

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April 21, 2019

John 20:1-18 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that Jesus must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Dear woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing Jesus to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ^[b] “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to God. But go to my brothers and sisters and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that Jesus had said these things to her.

Easter reframes everything! A way to glimpse Easter is to picture yourself in an enormous art museum full of before and after portraits; Friday and Sunday images. Each representing an Easter transformation. Gallery after gallery of weeping redeemed to joy.

In the foyer are two portraits: a dark foreboding Friday image of Jesus hanging on the cross in anguish and a towering illuminating, glorious Sunday image of the empty tomb stretching all the way to heaven where Jesus is smiling at you. The caption reads *Easter destroys the last enemy, death*. Your initial reaction is sadness; tears flood your eyes and you weep. You have experienced firsthand Friday death. People you loved have died. Your body is aging, and you know you also will die. The time gap between these portraits can be so long, waiting to be reunited. Three days was the time span between these two portraits, but for Mary who loved Jesus it seemed like an eternity as she wept. God sent angels to comfort Mary. They asked, “Why are you weeping?” It is easy to understand why angels would ask this question. For eternity they bask in the radiant joy of God. Every day is Easter Sunday. They will never experience the weeping of Friday. It seems so obvious to the angels. Jesus, full of love, left the splendor of heaven to transform all our weeping Friday moments into joyful Sundays. The angels wonder how Mary can, and you, linger in Friday when Jesus told you and showed you Sunday. Were you not listening all those times when Jesus explained that he would die on the cross and rise again to glorious, perfect eternal life, redeeming everything? Were you not paying attention when Jesus showed in the Lord’s Supper the Easter transformation from Friday to Sunday’s heavenly banquet? How could you not grasp Jesus fulfillment of all the prophecies about him that he explained to you. Plus, the angels have been working hard to get Mary’s and our attention with extraordinary events. Darkness at midday, the rugged temple curtain ripped in two, an earthquake, blinding light, a rolling stone. God didn’t need to do any of these things to resurrect Jesus, but God was hoping to get our attention so we can catch a glimpse of Easter to turn our weeping to joy.

Mary continues to weep, this time the resurrected Jesus appears and asks the same question, “Why are you weeping?” This time it is not really a question, rather it is Jesus’ way of connecting with Mary. Jesus wept so intensely in the Garden of Gethsemane that he sweated blood. In that Friday portrait, Jesus took on every sin, every pain, every negative emotion, every tear ever shed by you and the entire world. Jesus knows exactly how Mary feels. Jesus knows Mary is weeping, because she cannot visualize Sunday resurrection. Mary needed more than explanations and extraordinary miraculous signs to turn her weeping into joy. She needed to see Jesus adorned with the splendor of heaven smiling at her.

Jesus comes to you, takes your hand, and says, “Let me show you around the Easter museum.” Jesus brings you into the gallery of Moses. You notice the Friday portrait of Moses trembling, stuttering, unsure, and afraid before the burning bush, but what really grabs your attention is the Easter Sunday portrait. Moses is aglow with God’s splendor, passionately reading the Ten Commandments to the people with a booming voice. You stroll into the David gallery, and there in front of you is the most miserable broken man you have ever seen. Jesus says, “That Friday portrait was taken after David’s affair with Bathsheba which led to lies, trickery, and the murder of Uriah. Easter grace forgives all, purifies, and puts a new and right spirit within David and you.” The Easter Sunday portrait shows David awash with joy as he plays pleasing music on his harp. You stroll through countless galleries each of different people, each gallery full of portraits from their lives. Always two portraits; the first a weeping Friday and the second a joyful Easter Sunday. You are puzzled and ask Jesus, “I thought you said this is the Easter Museum? I was expecting portraits from your passion, but why is it filled with portraits of people? Jesus responds, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death,” but there are countless other enemies that were destroyed. Every enemy of love from the smallest to the biggest is destroyed. Wherever there is pain, brokenness, incompleteness or weeping, I am there working to reframe a beautiful masterpiece. Nothing is wasted, no one is ever discarded. I love everyone completely, so Easter is all the ways I am working to transform pain into peace, ugliness into goodness, hate into love, loneliness into community, weeping into joy. For every dark Friday possibility, I have an Easter resurrection awaiting. I am a loving creative master artist. My joy is spreading Easter glory everywhere.

Let me show you some of my simple works. We enter a gallery of dark nights eclipsed by beautiful sunrises, cold gloomy winter days warmed by bright spring days, chrysalises releasing butterflies, dormant earth bursting forth with lush life. The gallery goes on as far as you can see and is packed with portraits. Jesus says, “I created the cosmos to be full of Easter reminders for you. Love notes all around you. As a child you giggled and delighted at them, bringing me joy. There are many splendid surprises for you to discover. We are just beginning to discover the magnificence, order, and vastness of creation which I made for you.”

Jesus leads you into a gallery with four portraits; a bruised reed and a vibrant reed; a smothering wick and a blazing flame. Jesus says, “When Israel was rebelling and hurting themselves in every way imaginable, my prophet Isaiah became discouraged and wept. I gave him a vision of this gallery to turn his weeping into joy. It is a metaphor of my redeeming Easter work. Isaiah and Matthew wrote it in the Bible, my love letter to you, this way; **Isaiah 42:3 & Matthew 12:20 “A bruised reed God will not break and a smoldering wick God will not snuff out.”** The bruised reed is frail. Once a sturdy stalk, now it is bent, precariously hanging by a thread of plant tissue battered by the wind. Most of its connection to the nourishing roots severed, it withers about to die. At times everyone is a bruised reed no longer standing tall, severed from love, clinging to hope. Everyone at times is bruised by harsh words, failing health, another’s anger, a failure, a betrayal, legalistic religion, shattered dreams. Everyone is bruised by broken relationships in a fallen and broken world. What have you been bruised by? Jesus says, “I see every person as a priceless beloved masterpiece. I gently, carefully with love, touch your heart to heal and redeem you, to make you vibrant once again. I enjoy empowering you, so you can live life abundantly spreading Easter joy everywhere. I delight in making beautiful Sunday masterpieces together. Whether you realize it or not I do this every moment of your life. These are snippets of Easter transformation for Easter redeems everything. My resurrection in the past provides you with hope to live an Easter life.”

A smothering wick, on the verge of death. Once aflame now flickering and failing. Still warm from yesterday’s passion but not fire. Not yet cold but far from hot. There are seasons in your life when you will feel like a smothering wick. Your path once illumined will become dark and uncertain. Perhaps you will smother from a cold wind of criticism, chaos, or hardships. Perhaps you will smother from the turbulent wind of hatred, fear, violence, injustice or maybe a different wind is blowing into your life. You have and will become fatigued,

wore down, then a blast of wind will cause you to smother leaving you one moment away from darkness. Jesus says, I was thinking about these times in your life when I went to the cross for you so I can be in your heart at the moment that you need my light, the light of the world, to set you ablaze again. That is a portrait of a facet of Easter.

We enter another gallery with scenes from Jesus' time as God incarnate as man. There is an outcast leper healed and enjoying life. A confused, depressed man wandering in a cemetery alone transformed into a confident, cheerful man surrounded by friends. There is a woman with a dry life receiving abundant living water. A crook on a cross forgiven and made whole. There is a hungry crowd nourished. There are scores of portraits of outsiders welcomed into the community of God's loving family. An accused woman about to be stoned is forgiven and runs free. A paralytic walks. There is "searching" Nicodemus understanding what it means to be born again. Peter ashamed then passionate with love. Martha bereaved then joyfully embracing Lazarus. Though their situations vary, their conditions don't. They have nowhere to turn. On their lips a desperate prayer. In their heart a desolate dream. And in their hands a broken rope. You see how Jesus moved their stone, healed them, comforted them, redeemed them and provided them with exactly what they needed at exactly the right moment. You also see playful portraits. Tired fishermen enjoy a bountiful catch of fish. Water turned into wine to celebrate a wedding. Jesus said, "Matters were getting out of control on earth, so I became one of you and healed every disease, restored every broken spirit, crossed every barrier and gave vibrant life to every shattered dream. I showed you mighty Easter miracles and how to enjoy anew simple Easter pleasures.

Jesus says, "I have shown you all these Easter galleries and I am pleased that you are grateful for the past and are looking forward with joy to your own resurrection. My desire for you today is that you will see anew at least some of my Easter, "I love you notes." I desire that you have hope in the way I am working Easter miracles in your heart right now, so you can picture every tear transformed into joy. There is one more gallery I want to show you."

This gallery has your name on it. It is full of scenes from your life, again always in pairs. You see yourself as a baby crying and then squealing with delight. As a child afraid of the dark then secure with your favorite blanket. Bored then marveling at bubbles. All your Fridays are there and most of them have a Sunday as well. Jesus said, "I have permeated your life with Easter experiences. I am not yet done with you my beloved masterpiece. In time I will have a joyful Easter portrait for every one of your Fridays. Not one will be left undone. No tear is too small, no experience too trivial I sense them all and will reframe each and every one of them into a beautiful Easter portrait." As you walk deeper into the gallery, joy overwhelms you for you see the portraits of every person you have loved that has died. There beside their earthly portrait is a glorious portrait of them enjoying life triumphant. You marvel at the splendor of their resurrection body. You savor the depictions of the love you shared. At the end of the gallery is an enormous portrait not yet complete. It is of a room in heaven containing all your pure delights. Jesus seeing your amazement says, "I told you I was going ahead to prepare a place for you. I will use my Easter love to transform your frail physical body into the perfect vibrant eternal Easter body. Gone will be all the limits, discomforts, confinement, and weeping of your current body. You will be set free, your spirit will enjoy every wholesome dream you ever dreamed. I know why you weep sometimes. I wept, myself, on earth. Even I lost sight of all these glorious Sunday portraits in the midst of so many overwhelming Friday experiences. Easter is my gift to you so your weeping can be transformed into joy. Until I welcome you home where everyday is Easter always remember I love you, I am always with you, and Easter reframes everything." Amen