

**Tell It With Flowers**  
**By Rev. Todd Farnsworth**

**Mark 15: 46-16: 7**

*46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*

This morning we are going to flower this Cross. We're going to do it a little differently than you've done it before, but trust me when I say, this Cross will be blooming before we are done!

I was curious about *why* we "flower the Cross" in the first place. We never did anything like this at any of the churches I served in New England. I wondered if it was a sort of April Fool's joke when the deacons told me about it! (kind of like putting a Christmas cover over the Easter bulletins or messing with the scripture reading!) But alas, they were serious and as I investigated the folk tradition I found some interesting "roots" in the practice.



To begin with, flowering the Cross tells the story of each one of us who has ever experienced loss or brokenness. Maybe you've lost a job, or a had a relationship end through miscommunication, betrayal, or death. Maybe you've been hit with a disease that leaves you different than you were before. It could be someone has created an ugly meme about you on facebook. Or spread a rumor about you that has had nasty ramifications.

Whatever it is that has left you with less than before, this Cross speaks to that issue. Last week this particular cross was covered with palm fronds. It teemed with life. As the days past it has become more brittle, like some of us here today. We are in the place that Mark told about: **46** *So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.* **47** *Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.*

And it's not a pretty place. On the other hand, the sun came up today, like it did 2000 years ago. So maybe there is hope? Let's sing as the women who went by the tree so long ago, come by to discover what God can do.

### **Hymn 53, Morning Has Broken.**

Have you ever noticed how when all is lost, you are suddenly found? A friend will call with some encouraging words. Your doctor will tell of a new medicine. The hospice worker will introduce you to a treatment that will

bring you or a loved one peace. As I read about the flowering Cross I noticed that it tells the story of a budding hope the women who came that morning experienced when they discovered that the tomb was empty. It wasn't clearly defined. A missing stone. A roll of linens. A gardner who knew their name. Sometimes it isn't a thunderbolt and lightning experience that changes the game, but a quiet, unexpected door opening, that allows us room to dream about new possibilities. It happened that way for Mary: **13** *They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."* **14** *At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.* **15** *He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."* **16** *Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

In that quiet moment it was as if an angelic choir ([angel of the Lord](#)) had sung hope back into her life! Let's listen...and after the angels sing it through once, I invite everyone identifying as a woman age 18-55 to come forward while the congregation echoes the angel's song.

### **God's Not Dead/In the Garden**

It's not much to look at, a few flowers here and there, but you know how when hope gets a hold on you, it starts to spread like pachysandra or a rash? I remember learning that if an individual can think of three possible outcomes, they can usually think of thirty more. One outcome is a trap. Two outcomes is a struggle. Three is the number that releases the creative juices. Clearly the women who had encountered the risen Jesus were on a

roll. They just had to spread the Good news they had encountered. As is often the case with unexpected blessings, some folks embrace it, and some folks are wary. How can it be? It seems too good to be true. They had no idea.

*When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.--Luke 24*

The flowering cross tells the story of how Jesus' resurrection offers us another option to the difficult situations we find ourselves in. It opens up opportunities of escape from the traps and struggles of life. He Lives! And so can we, in new ways.

### **Let's sing, 226, He Lives!**

When we discover that what we thought was the end is actually a pause until a new beginning we often experience new life for ourselves. As you can see, it's quite beautiful, and very exciting! Of course, some folks will scoff at our newfound enthusiasm, our *joi de vivre!* They'll try to tell us that "it's just a coincidence." or "*You* put the pieces in place for that good thing to happen. There is no such thing as God...it's just an illogical story...a myth... an April fool's joke"

I'm not so sure about that.

I know that I can't fix all of my problems. I know that even the wisest people I know don't have all the answers to every social emotional, or physical ill. It makes sense to me that there is someone "bigger" than us, "wiser" than us, nudging us, guiding us, healing us in ways that go beyond what we can



understand. It is comforting that I don't have to have all the answers in order to be ok. I can trust that someone is out there who cares so much about me that he was willing to sacrifice himself for me. I love you guys, but I'm not sure if I could do that! Still it inspires me to try harder because Jesus was willing to come back for me. He was willing to offer me the same deal. I gotta tell you, I love that guy. I love this blooming genius of a Savior who we celebrate in flowers today. What he did makes me want to be a better person. It gives me courage to try a little harder. It encourages me to help others and work for justice and open doors for people, just like Jesus did for me. It may seem foolish to some, but then this is a day for Fools! Paul writes about being a fool in his first letter to the Corinthians:

*9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ!*

*--1 Corinthians 4.*

Foolish? Guilty as charged.

Coincidence? Meh.

Luck? Jesus' love has been too consistent in my life.

Illogical? I know my limits. Trusting in this story gives a structure to my life that makes a difference; that makes sense to me. Maybe some folks find comfort in doing it all on their own, but trying to play God seems way too complicated and stressful to me. Case in point, I like to sing, but I don't do it *concert quality*. So, I don't sing, Mine is the Glory, I sing *Thine* Is the Glory! I invite you to sing along.

### **Hymn 218, Thine is the Glory**

My one, silly flower doesn't do much to tell the story, but when it is placed near all these other flowers, it begins to make a statement. It tells a story of resurrection. That's a big word that's been bandied around this morning. Resurrection. Rising to new life after death. It is certainly something we celebrate Jesus doing on Easter Sunday...but it is also something that we participate in whenever we share the story of his gift.

Jesus encouraged his followers to tell his story. He encourages us to share it with young and old and everyone in between.

- Some folks use words.
- Some folks use songs.
- Some people use art.
- Some use math or science or history or horseback riding to tell the story of how we can get back in the saddle, and try again...even after dying!

Jesus' story of new life describes how that gift of holy resilience doesn't have to be in our control. It's ok to take an assist from someone who loves you more than you can begin to comprehend...someone who is always on your side. We don't have to do it alone...I believe Jesus will be with us in ways that I don't need to fully understand to reap the benefits from.

Speaking of "reaping" let's take another look at our cross. Looking good, but I think it needs...well...I guess I'd add that in sharing the story of God's transforming death into new life, some people will take the FTD route, and *tell it with flowers!*



Let's celebrate the beauty of Easter; the glory of new life coming forth from death; the promise of unexpected acceptance; the anticipation of opportunities born of a Savior who will never abandon us. If you are of story listening or story telling age, and you haven't brought your flower forward yet, invite you to do it now. The cross awaits your participation so everyone can behold the beautiful, life transforming hope of Easter morning!

**Hymn 222, Christ is Risen! Shout**

**Hosanna!**