

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 8/28/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 29 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the military personnel of our nation. Pray for their safety and protection. Thank GOD for their willingness to serve in defense of our nation and express your gratitude for the freedom they protect that allows us to worship as we choose.*

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Rob Bell, in his book *What Is the Bible?* points out that the Bible was written by human beings. This is an important thing to keep in mind when you read the Bible because it gives us some perspective on what we're reading. The writers are people just like us who can be in awe, sometimes misunderstand, and will take note of small details that can color our reading in valuable ways.

Take, for example, the resurrection. All four Gospel writers include a resurrection story. Together they tell about the betrayal of JESUS by one of the twelve, HIS last meal with HIS friends, HIS suffering, crucifixion, and rising from the dead. You probably knew all that. But I think the Easter narratives are particularly interesting. Mark reports that on the Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to JESUS' tomb. Matthew says it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. (How would you like to be remembered as "the other Mary"?) John says it was just Mary Magdalene. In John's Gospel, Mary talks to the guy she thinks is the gardener, but when HE says her name, she realizes that it's JESUS and that HE'S alive! (I didn't know whether to put a question mark there or an exclamation point. So, I put both.) Luke tells us that same guy walked with two of JESUS' followers from Jerusalem to Emmaus (about 7½ miles) talking all the way, but they didn't recognize HIM until HE broke bread with them and then they realize it's JESUS?! (See. I reversed the order of the punctuation at the end there.)

Isn't interesting that the people who were closest to JESUS and spent the most time with HIM don't recognize HIM after the resurrection?

One gospel mentions an earthquake during the crucifixion which the others leave out.

John says there were two angels in the tomb sitting where JESUS' body had been, while Luke says it was two men in gleaming white, and Mark says it was a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side of the tomb, and Matthew says it was an angel of the LORD who rolled back the stone...and then sat on it. These four accounts are confusing and conflicted, to say the least.

But remember, they were written by human beings who may have remembered events differently. And before someone tells you these differences are the reason you can't believe the story, let me point out that there are some details that tell us some important things.

First, in the first century, women were not respected or considered credible. They couldn't testify in court. So, why in that culture would you tell a story that is based so significantly on the witness of women?

Second, when JESUS met HIS disciples in Galilee, they worshiped HIM...but some doubted. Why would Matthew include this? If the point of the story is that JESUS is the long-awaited MESSIAH, why would you include a line about some of HIS followers doubting?

Think for a moment, though. If something extraordinary happened in your life, how would you tell it? In a calm, orderly, well-structured manner or in a haphazard, somewhat confused way that comes from experiencing something so unexpected that you have a hard time even describing it? Which leads to the question, is the confused way that these human beings told the story a good reason to dismiss it? Which leads to yet another

question: when each of the Gospel writers includes details like some followers doubting or women being witnesses, why risk it? Why include this thing that could result in your story being discredited...unless it was actually true?

When you run into conflicts or confusion or differences like these, remember that the Bible was written by human beings who were trying to find ways to talk about things for which they had no point of reference or previous experience. And when you do that, you might just find the divine. Because you find the divine through and in the human and not by going around it. Because that's who our GOD is: ONE who came not to observe but to be in the midst of our lives inspiring us to tell stories that are sometimes confusing and different. Because we don't always have the words to explain what it is to be in relationship with the divine.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey