

April 17, 2022 Easter Sunday

John 20:1-18

“Searching and Finding”

A couple is sitting on their couch watching TV.

Can you please turn down the volume?

Oh wait, I’ve seen this movie before.

No, you haven’t. This is a brand-new release.

I’m telling you. I’ve seen this movie. See, look, she thinks her friend is dead, and he was, only he’s not.

Shhhh! Don’t spoil it.

Ok. Sorry. Sorry.

But you’re wrong. This is brand new.

I could swear we’ve watched this. Wasn’t it early in the pandemic when we were binge watching all those police dramas?

Nope.

Well, ok. But it reminds me of SOMETHING.

You’re probably remembering that actress. She is so good. She always plays this really smart character who figures stuff out before all the guys do.

Oh yeah, I like her...

You know, you’re probably remembering the plot of that other story we liked, the one of the couple who lived alone in that majestic, paradise of a garden, and they had it all to themselves. And in the middle of the garden was this one particular tree. It was the tree that made everything make sense, the tree of life.

Well, now that you mention it... the climactic scene here, the murder scene and now this cemetery scene are all in a garden. Right. And the tree, well the three trees, only it was more like the tree of death where they killed him.

No, but that’s it. It LOOKS like the tree of death, but I think it’s going to be the tree where life BEGAN! Oh, yeah, this is clever.

But he’s dead (but not really), right?

See, see, look, she looks and the tomb is open and empty.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers? Is that the movie I’m thinking of?

Shhh! Watch, she ran to tell the others. They won’t believe her. They never do.

Yeah, these guys are kinda dorky. First you think they're going to be really good, but then they just fizzle out. Hey, but at least they're loyal. I mean, they're killing themselves to get to the cemetery.

Oh sure, the young guy outruns the old man. But then, look, he won't go in. Big chicken.

Alright, here comes the old guy. Bet he goes in: yep, I knew it. I'm telling you, we've seen this movie.

Will you stop? What is that.

What?

Those neat piles inside the tomb.

Laundry?

Will you be serious.

I am! Look, he just said it: it was what they had wrapped the body in.

So... no body.

(It think he's dead but not really dead)

Stop.

Sorry.

So, wait, they're just going to leave? They're not going to look for him?

Chickens.

She's back. She's so upset. Ah, but now she is really going INSIDE the tomb.

WHOA! Who are those guys?

I bet they know where the body is. But they're going to play twenty questions? Of course she's looking for her friend.

So, then, I'm wrong. He is really dead and someone took him? But why fold the laundry. Wait, who's that guy standing there? The gardener? What gardener?

Bingo. Oh this is clever. It's HIM! And like in the other story of that paradise garden, the gardener was, well, God, and took care of the garden with that couple, now here he is, and he is, well, God, and he is like the symbolic gardener who had meant for this particular garden to be the crossroads of all that was death with all that is now life.

She doesn't think it's him...

Just wait... now she recognizes him. He said her name. She gets it.

But why is he being so weird about her hugging him?

Listen, listen: he doesn't want her distracted. He's letting her in on the whole thing. This is it. She knew it in her heart but didn't have the words, the way to explain it. This is unprecedented.

So, OK, at least I got that part right. He wasn't really dead then.

Oh, no, he was dead. But this is beyond that. He is beyond death. A life beyond death. He kept telling them about it and they didn't get it.

I don't get it.

And now it's up to her. She has the task to tell the others. They won't believe her.

They won't believe her.

But she has to say it: "I have seen the Lord. He knew my name. His face was the same but different. And he said that he would return to God in heaven. I have seen the Lord. I have seen him with my own two eyes."

It's gonna have to be personal for them too. They saw the emptiness of the tomb but they'll need the fullness of his presence.

I get that, though. It's not until it's personal that I get it, that I feel that presence. People can tell me and tell me, but when I feel it in my own life, it has a fuller meaning. And I have experienced pain, even pain of death, but it is that presence of God's life that makes me believe that something new can come of this, that life can come from death. And it may come in unexpected places. That's usually the best way, so I'm not really looking for it or guessing it. Resurrection blows our minds. We want resuscitation. We want the old things, awakened by CPR and back to normal. But that's not what this was. It was an end. Period. And then an unexpected beginning. Just when you thought the story was over, it isn't. We want pre-pandemic living again, but do we really? How about post-pandemic reality ... a new start. It all depends on what we're looking for and what we open ourselves up to finding. Because maybe we find something we didn't know we needed to look for.

Wisdom Commentary. *John 11-20*. Mary L. Coloe. Series editor Barbara E. Reid. OP. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. 2021. P.507-522.

<https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cDovL3d3dy53b3JraW5ncHJlYWNoZXlub3JnL3Jzcy9uYXJyYXRpdmUueG1s/episode/ODlmN2lwYjEtYTJhMy00NjQzLTkxNzktNjdhMTQyMWE3ZTEy?ep=14>

Reflection questions

1. What has been a time when God surprised you?
2. In John 20:1-18, how would you compare the reactions of the men and Mary Magdalene? Do you relate to anyone in the story?
3. It's been said that for resurrection to happen, there first has to be a death. How does that apply to your life?