

“Seeking: Who Are You Looking for?”
John 20

The great writer and teacher Richard Rohr often says, “We see reality as we are,” meaning that we sometimes cannot see what is right in front of us because we have a veil or a filter that gets in the way.

Here is an example for you. I am going to recite a famous nursery rhyme.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
*All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.*

What image comes to your mind when you hear this rhyme? (image of an egg) The interesting thing is that the original image of an egg was not always the way to see this rhyme as the words themselves do not mention an egg. It was not until 1872 that Lewis Carroll wrote his novel, *Through the Looking-Glass*, that Humpty Dumpty was depicted as an egg. But according to historians, the original Humpty Dumpty was not an egg, not a chicken, not a man but a CANNON. A large cannon which is believed to have been used in English Civil War (1642-1649), specifically, in the 1648 Siege of Colchester. According to Emily Blatchford, “The rhyme came about because as Colchester was under siege, one of the cannons from the attacking side managed to destroy the wall 'Humpty Dumpty' was positioned on. Hence, Humpty Dumpty came tumbling down. Due to its massive size, none of the king's horses and none of the king's men were able to put it back together again... and so Humpty's legacy was born.”

What we already know sometimes gets in the way of our ability to see with fresh eyes. Our assumptions prevent us from being able to experience the grace of God. Questions can help us to pause and to examine our assumptions. In our Bible story of this week, we hear about one of the close companions of Jesus who needed to pause and to listen to a question in order to see with clarity. This is the Easter story according to the Gospel of John where Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' disciples, went to the tomb, but did not find his body there. She sent for two of the other disciples who came and found the tomb empty but then left. She stayed there weeping. You can imagine why. Her assumption was that the body was stolen. And even when she saw Jesus alive, she assumed that he was the gardener.

Let's listen to 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. ²So 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.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He

bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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." ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him 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." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The tears, the pain, the grief, and the fear surrounding all the events of the death of Jesus were too much to bear and they blocked Mary from being able to see Jesus beyond the limits of her rational mind. She came to the tomb expecting to mourn and to cry. She did not come with the expectation of encountering Jesus. The two-part question Jesus asked her was very powerful: Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?

Let's pause for a moment to let this question become to us a wake-up call from our own expectations and barriers to seeing Jesus today. Who are we looking for? What gets in the way of our ability to see and experience God in our midst?

Easter is not a story about the past. It is the reality of our daily life. The resurrection is all around us, if only we can be present to the fullness of who we are to life. Asking ourselves questions about our fearful assumptions each day can become a powerful doorway into a more expansive life. Instead of living with fear, through the resurrection of Jesus, we are reminded of the eternal and loving nature of our lives. Instead of living focused on our needs and wants that come from fear, faith calls us to expand our vision of being connected to all of God's creation. Pause each morning and ask God to help you to live each day with the newness of life that is given to us and with the awareness of all that is eternal.

This Lenten journey has been about asking questions that could free us from fearful thoughts and ways:

- Our tendency to blame others or ourselves when bad things happen
- Our fears that drive us to relentless pursuits of control, esteem, and security
- Our fear of uncertainty
- Our fear of the other
- Our fear of death

Today is the culmination of these questions by seeking to look at reality with fresh eyes; eyes that are open to mystery and trust instead of fear. I pray that you will know the power of resurrection in your life today, to free you from fear so that you will live each day focused on love.

I will send you with these words from Rob Bell: “Resurrection announces that God has not given up on the world because this world matters. This world that we call home: dirt and blood and sweat and skin and light and water. This world that God is redeeming and restoring and renewing. Greed and violence and abuse are not right and cannot last because they belong to death and death does not belong. Resurrection says that what we do with our lives matter in this body the one that we inhabit right now...there’s nothing left to fear and nothing can ever be the same. We are living in the world in the midst of rescue...So when you find yourself assuming that it’s over, lost, gone, broken, and it can never be put back together again. When it has been destroyed and you swear that it could never be rebuilt, hold on a minute because in that moment things will in fact have just begun.” Amen.