

May 15, 2022 – Easter 5 (C)
Week 4: Reflections on the Resurrection

During the Easter season, Sermons That Work is pleased to present reflections from bishops of The Episcopal Church on the resurrection of our Lord. Check back each week for a brief exploration of how Jesus Christ's rising from the grave changes everything. To listen to this reflection, scan the QR code on this page and subscribe to the Sermons That Work podcast.

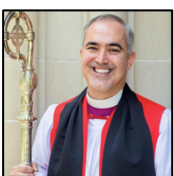
In John's version of Easter, Mary lingers at the empty tomb after Peter and John run quickly away. When the risen Jesus appears in front of her, she mistakes him for the gardener. It's an understandable miss. In the grip of all the trauma and grief from the events of Good Friday, she certainly wouldn't be expecting the one for whom she grieves to be suddenly standing in front of her. It's easy to overlook that moment as an unimportant detail.

However, as I return to this story year after year, I've come to think it's not a mistake at all, that Mary gets it exactly right, and that this detail helps us understand why the Resurrection really matters.

The original vocation to which God calls humanity is tilling and keeping the world God has made. We initially failed in that calling, choosing ourselves and our own way over God and God's way of love. The whole arc of scripture is essentially the story of God's project to reforest a world that has become desolate with suffering, violence, and death as a result of our rejection of God. Of course, Jesus is the gardener! His resurrection is the unmistakable assurance of God's intention to restore the desert we have made of the world to the original garden God intended, lush with the fruits of love, life, justice, and peace.

Jesus died a real death. The same death each of us fears, and that we have seen take so many we love. For the Resurrection to mean anything, it must be every bit as real as that death. Jesus the gardener reminds us that, as an Easter people, the point of our faith and our lives is not to escape from the world and its pain, but rather to join Jesus in renewing the world, planting seeds of hope, watering the parched places of pain, tilling the soil toward justice, working the land to nurture the feast of love God intended. We don't find the Beloved Community by retreating to somewhere else, we find it by following Jesus to where the pain is, and by digging, by tilling, by keeping.

Plant a tree in these days of Easter. Grow a garden. Make it a sign and sacrament of how we are called in every moment to bear witness to the great good news that death is not what it appears to be. Even now, the green shoots of faith and hope are bringing about God's perfect reign of love, joy, and life that knows no end.
Alleluia!



*This reflection was written by **the Rt. Rev. Craig Loya**. Bishop Loya was consecrated the X Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota on June 6, 2020. He served as Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Omaha, Nebraska from 2013-2020, and was the Canon to the Ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas from 2009-2013. He received his Master of Divinity from Yale University and a Diploma in Anglican Studies from Berkeley Divinity School at Yale in 2002.*