

**Easter Sermon**  
**12 April 2009**  
**“Christ is Risen! Presente”**

*Kirkland Congregational Church United Church of Christ*  
*Ana Gobledale preaching*

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Hello God, we know you are there. “Our rock and our redeemer” and all that. Yes, we are celebrating the empty tomb. Pretty impressive stuff. But there are some questions. *[Pause.]*

What questions?

Well, take the scriptures we read this morning. Mary Magdalene finds the tomb empty. She reports the body's disappearance to the disciples. Disciples race through the dark to see for themselves. They leave when they see what she says is true. Mary returns to the tomb. She weeps. One of her best friends, Jesus, has just been brutally executed by the State. And, add insult to injury, now his body has disappeared. *[Pause.]*

What is the question? I am getting to that.

Your messengers appear, angels. Wooden-heads would be a better description. Might Mary get some answers about the missing body? NO! Your heralds of good news deliver NO news. They only ask a silly question, “Why are you weeping?” Why is she weeping?!!! *[Pause.]*

Why is that a silly question? Come on, as if the execution of her best friend is not enough, someone steals his body! Why is she weeping? *[Pause.]*

Okay, okay, perhaps wooden-heads is a pretty harsh way to describe your angels. I admit the disciples in the gospels of John and Mark are pretty dense themselves. Over and over, Jesus teaches that he will die and that you will return him to life. Yes, most everyone in the gospels misses the point but still, I struggle, today. *[Pause.]*

With what part?

Well, how about the part when Mary turns around? That's a real zinger! Someone is standing there. Mary assumes it is the gardener. But hang on, it is Jesus. God, Mary does not recognize the resurrected Jesus?! What were you thinking? I mean, if you are going to resurrect someone from the dead, the least you could do is make sure that person's best friends recognize the returnee, the newly resurrected!

Many of us have puzzled through the years, “Why does Mary not recognize Jesus?” That really makes things complicated, unnecessarily, it seems to me. A lot of time has been spent on Easter sermons trying to explain that one! *[Pause.]*

What? What do you mean wasted time? We are focusing on the wrong thing? What should we focus on?

You want me to ask my mother?!!

Alright, she just happens to be here. But, I guess you knew that already.

[Take mike to Dotty Dale.]

Mom, God says I am supposed to ask you what Easter means...what the resurrection means. So, what does Easter mean to you? How do YOU explain this mystery?

\* \* \*

[El Salvador; Presente!; The dead live on with us]

Yes, I remember that conversation with my mom on her 84<sup>th</sup> birthday.

What did I ask her? I asked what the resurrection meant to her.

Well, she said for years it was a mystery to her. Then she went to El Salvador. At church gatherings in El Salvador the names of those who have died are called out. Everyone gathered responds "Presente," present. Suddenly the resurrection is clear!

\* \* \*

Jesus!

*Presente!*

Suddenly the resurrection is clear! The dead live on with us, encouraging us, emboldening us, giving us a reason to continue to follow Jesus and work for peace and justice. We may mourn the life passed from the body, but they live on, and through them Christ is in our midst. They give us the courage to live on, to not succumb to despair as Judas did. "Presente!" Their presence with us, the presence of the risen Christ, gives us the hope of redemption.

Christ...God incarnate...alive in our midst...through the living and the dead.

On this Day of Resurrection, let us remember those who surround us as a cloud of witnesses, guiding us, empowering us, to better follow Christ's way of love, justice and peace. And let the people recognize the presence of the resurrected Christ through them, saying "Presente!"

- The martyred of El Salvador
- Bishop Oscar Romero
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Francis of Assisi
- Harvey Milk of San Francisco
- Those who have died of AIDS yet never lost their faith
- Dorothy Day
- Steven Biko and others who died resisting Apartheid in South Africa

The tomb IS empty, for the Power of Christ has been released into all the world! God is present! Christ has risen! Alleluia! Amen.