

**Good Enough Faith**  
**April 17, 2022**  
**Easter Morning**  
**John 20:1-17**  
**Rev. Laurie Crelly at East Church**  
**Grand Rapids, MI**

I love gardening and getting my hands in the dirt. How many of you share this joy? I find our Christian Faith can be compared to a garden in so many ways. We even hear metaphors of gardening or farming in scripture because of the culture that Jesus lived in. So, it has been helpful during this Lenten Season to have the garden as a motif to reflect upon. We used this image to remind us to be planted where we are rather than constantly striving for an imagined level of perfection that the world demands of us. I reminded people that we don't need to be super Christians. God uses all kinds of imperfect people to do good in the world. I shared that sometimes life gets hard or is out of our control and it's ok to just be present. We explored the many ways that God brings healing to us and through us. We were reminded that life is fragile and that God is gentle and grieves with us in the midst of personal suffering. Through it all we remembered that our faith is Good Enough. Good Enough to carry us through those times of weakness. Good enough to give us hope and Good enough to transform us and the world to be people of God seeking the kingdom of God and God's righteousness for our world.

In the beginning of lent it was a little harder to imagine growing in faith like a garden when there was still snow on the ground. But just like the promising warm winds of spring we too warmed to the idea that God is helping us grow right here, right now.

As a gardener I am fascinated by the miracle of new life. It is a miracle to me that you can take a dried seed, one that is perhaps years maybe decades old, place it in some soil, add water and wait. We can even take a bulb, bury it in the ground in the fall and see it come up the first few warm days of spring. Just this past week I spotted some stems of a new plant pushing up through the cold ground in my front flowerbed. Year

after year you can return to that spot and find those bulbs pushing forth new growth like magic. Amazing. Simply amazing to me.

Friday night we ended our service in our memorial Garden remembering the bleakness of that day and the shared sorrow we remember of loved ones who have died. The cold wind that blew around us felt like the sting of death. We felt the heaviness of grief once again, we are companions of such sorrow with the disciples so long ago.

This morning we see Mary go to the tomb weeping and grieving once again. We know the sleepless grief she felt as she waited for the slimmest sign of daylight to go to the tomb. Grief and loss, especially a traumatic and violent loss, leaves people numb and in shock. Jesus' death was all that and then some. We heard Jesus pronounced innocent by Pilate and still he was executed. An innocent person full of love and kindness taken away, whipped and killed publicly at the hands of an oppressive force, an empire seeking a reign of terror in the Name of peace, Pax Romana the peace of Rome.

So what did Mary go to the tomb to do, to see? Was her faith killed on the cross with Jesus? Did all hope die that day? Do you or I know what it means to have your faith destroyed by the violent actions of others? I know that I have had my faith tested because of injustice, especially atrocities done in the name of God. I have questioned God's love when I watch the suffering of others around me. I too share in the cries of Jesus himself, "my God, my God why have you forsaken me." Wondering why God remains silent in the face of such suffering. Jesus shared in all of that, not only taking on human flesh, but our own sinful humanity, suffering under the hands of corrupt sinful powers.

Can you relate to Mary's pain? Have you been there seeking healing and closure only to have it ripped open unexpectedly? It is as if time stands still. We feel lost and alone wondering where to turn for help and then we hear, "Why are you crying. Whom do you seek?" Words of comfort and understanding from a stranger, a gardener perhaps.

Even in the midst of our doubt and grief, Jesus meets us, comes to us in the most ordinary ways even disguised in the face of a stranger. We may even mistake God as the gardener like Mary did.

Mary didn't fully realize that she had found what she was looking for. It wasn't until she heard her name, "Mary" did she realize her seeking was over. Jesus is here, and Jesus is alive. More than that, she realized that all that he had said, all of his teachings were true and that he has come back to life with salvation in his hand.

The hopes and dreams she thought she was going to bury that morning along with Jesus' body were present in the resurrection of Christ. He was alive!!! He said that he would rise again and indeed he did.

Even today we, like Mary, seek something, unsure of what we will find. Then unexpectedly that voice speaks our name, calls to us and we know that what we have been seeking is here, alive and full of truth, born anew within our hearts. We cannot fully explain how, but we know it's true. It has endured the test of time and has not died. It has overcome the death once and for all. It is a Good Enough Faith. A faith good enough to survive the cold harsh winter of fear and doubt, when the world seems to make no sense. Good enough faith to spring forth with new life at the sound of Jesus' voice calling us by name. A resurrection faith that defies death and springs eternal. WE too like Mary cry out – "He is alive!! For we have seen the Lord."