



We are people of the story – not story in the sense of something made up but story in the sense of something true that is repeated and taken into ourselves until it is very part of who we are. We are the story. The story of God’s love for us. God’s hope that we will be part of recreating a world where all live in peace and flourish. God’s story is revealed in Holy Scripture and in our lives and in the lives of all who recognize God as creator and redeemer.

Any of you who have children or who have worked with children know how important stories are. “Read to me” a child cries and you sigh and pick up one of the Pete the Cat series, Kindness Rules or one of Eric Carle’s fabulously illustrated books – or whatever the book is that has captured the imagination of that child. Over and over again. Read to me. Let me hear the story until I take it into myself and can recite it from memory. Until I know the story so well that it is part of me and part of how I see and understand the world. Until the moral and ethical and theological implications of the story become my world view and inform how I live and how I treat other people.

This is, perhaps, one reason why we celebrate Easter. The promise that God has given to us that no matter what we do, no matter how much death seems to be the end there is, in fact, more to the story. More to the love that God gives to us. We cannot earn that love or that grace. It is simply poured out on us in the hope that we will respond. That we will turn from a mindset and actions that made the crucifixion necessary. That we will turn towards God, each other and all creation in awe and wonder that life can be so good.

Recovering from a deeply debilitating illness, Katherine Hankey wrote the following:¹
 Tell me the old, old story,
 Of unseen things above,
 Of Jesus and His glory,
 Of Jesus and His love;
 Tell me the story simply,
 As to a little child,
 For I am weak and weary,
 And helpless and defiled.

Tell me the old, old story,
 Of Jesus and His love.

¹ <https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bhankey.html> (April 15, 2019)

Ms. Hankey wrote these words in 1866 – but they still appeal to us in 2019. The yearning to know God and God’s love for us does not go out of fashion. It is enduring, especially when times are dark. And so we tell the story once again.

This morning we read once again the story of the women going to the tomb. They had one last task to perform to honor Jesus. The man who had taught them much but at the last, they thought, had been overcome by the powers of the day. The man who, in teaching about God’s love for humanity and God’s desire that we love one another as God has loved us, was seen to be a traitor to a way of life and a power structure that kept the Jewish people as subjects of an empire- at that time the Romans but before that it had been the Greeks or the Persians or the Name your favorite invading military and political power. The story before that Easter morning was one of persecution and domination.

And so the women come to the tomb prepared to anoint Jesus’s body with spices. But the stone was rolled away and the body gone. And Luke tells us that: “While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you ... that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ... But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”

I love to tell the story but the story is not always believed. We can be told something – indeed Jesus told his disciples that he must be handed over to sinners that he would be crucified and then he would rise again- but all of that was so far outside of their normal understanding that it seemed an idle and a foolish tale.

Face-to-face with the empty tomb though and with the words of the two men in dazzling clothes, the women believe and go to tell others. And, as so often happens when faced with something outside of our normal understanding, our response is like the others: we do not believe. We need to hear the story over and over again. To let it sink into our very being, to begin to understand the depth and breadth of what God has done for us in the resurrection.

The resurrection is not a fact that can be proved by scientific experiment or archaeological exploration. It is a truth that must be lived through and with faith. It is a fact that we can hold as true because we know the story of God’s love for us and the promise made to us who believe by reading Scripture and by telling the story contained in Scripture time and time again.

John Westerhoff reminds us that “the church is a story-formed community. ... Our most important and fundamental task as Christians is to learn God’s story.”² Today’s story – that Jesus, who was crucified on Good Friday, is not bound to this earth and indeed has risen, is the central story of our faith. It is a story that shows with God death is not the end but rather the beginning.

² John H. Westerhoff III. [A Pilgrim People](#) (New York: Church Publishing, 2005)

It is a story that for many seems an idle tale. And yet that idle tale was repeated and repeated and what we know today as Christianity becomes a dominant world religion. A way of understanding life and our relationships to each other.

Westerhoff continues: “Sacred story, or God’s story as found in the Holy Scriptures, embraces history but is not merely history. Sacred stories are destroyed when taken literally, for their function is to point beyond themselves to God and to bring the experience of God into our present.”

We all need such a story. Stories are the means by which we see reality. ... Faith in manifested in story; story communicates faith.”³ The Resurrection is our central story that communicates what we hold most dear: That with God nothing is impossible. That with God’s grace and love we can be part of creating a world where all are loved, where all live in peace, and where all have enough and where all of God’s creation is once again known as good, indeed very good. We help this come about each time we tell the story and each day we live the truth that Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. **Amen. Alleluia.**

³ Id, 3-4