

Suttons Bay Congregational Church
John 20:1-18 *Finding the Time for Finding*

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My new favorite breakfast is a coating of creamy peanut butter on a piece of toasted Ezekiel bread. Ezekiel bread comes in an orange and white bag touting numerous health benefits. The bag quotes scripture from the prophet Ezekiel in the Bible's Old Testament "Take also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make bread of it . . ." With all of those different grains in it, a piece of Ezekiel bread is not unlike portions of the Old Testament . . . a little bit dense, dry, and takes a while to get through; in order to appreciate it, you need to take your time with it.

And, in the case of Ezekiel bread, slather it with peanut butter. Putting the peanut butter on it as soon as it comes out of the toaster oven makes the peanut butter get kind of melty which makes the bread easier to swallow—well, melty peanut butter and two large glasses of water make it easier to swallow. All in all it's a fine breakfast because it's a little bit sweet, a little bit salty, has some protein, and it requires me to get hydrated first thing in the morning what with all that water I need to drink along with it.

Unfortunately I wasn't able to have my Ezekiel bread with peanut butter a few mornings ago because I couldn't find the Ezekiel bread anywhere in the fridge. I even checked the produce drawer (which can be sort of a scary place) but alas, no Ezekiel was to be found. This was a bit of a mystery to me because it seemed like I had just opened a new loaf a few days before. I didn't have time to run down to the deep freeze and thaw out another loaf. I had oatmeal instead.

When I opened the fridge back up to get out the maple syrup to put on my oatmeal, I had to move the loaf of Ezekiel bread that was in front of it in order to get to the syrup. And there I stood with that loaf of Ezekiel bread in my hand, somewhat dismayed at how I could have missed it right there in the front of the top left shelf of the fridge. It was at my eye level. Granted, it's usually on the second shelf on the left of the fridge but come on . . . The very thing I was looking for was not missing, it was right there in front of me the whole time.

My best guess as to why that happened was that my mind was occupied by thoughts of other things that morning. Most likely I was worried about something—probably something over which I have no control—and in my anxious looking I was not seeing what was right there in front of me. In *Siddhartha* (Sih-dar-ta), one of Hermann Hesse's books "about the individual's search for authenticity, self-knowledge and spirituality"¹ he writes, "What should I possibly have to tell you, oh venerable one? Perhaps that you're searching far too much? That in all that searching, you don't find the time for finding?"

Finding the time for finding . . . it's not hard to imagine that this is the challenge Mary faces during the wee small hours of the morning in that garden on the first Easter morning. She has spent what was likely a near-sleepless night anxiously awaiting the horrible honor that awaited her the next morning, going to the tomb to embalm the body of her teacher, Jesus. The task had already been delayed a day due to the Sabbath, she would be glad when it was finally over.

But when she arrived, the tomb was empty. She ran to tell others. Two of them came running, saw that what Mary proclaimed was true and then they left her there alone as they returned to where they had stayed the night before.

Alone there, not knowing what else to do, Mary bent down and looked into the tomb one more time, likely hoping the whole thing had just been a nightmare and she would find Jesus' body lying on the rock slab within. But instead, there were angels. They asked why she was crying.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Hesse

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Teacher!”

Indeed, isn't it so often this way . . . We thought we were going to find something in a certain place. When it's not where we thought it would be, we search for it with such a frantic energy that we don't realize it's been there along, maybe just in a different spot. It could be that we get so locked into our own expectations about how or where something or someone is going to be that we become blind to how or where something or someone actually is. No, Jesus' dead body wasn't in the tomb. But, Mary found Jesus resurrected and alive! An incredible shock and welcome surprise.

The Risen Christ surprised Mary. The Risen Christ often surprises us, showing up in ways we weren't expecting, abiding in places where we weren't looking, being revealed to us just when we were about to give up.

One of the miracles of Easter is that every morning can be Easter morning—the beginning of a new day that presents an opportunity to find the time to find the Risen Christ within us and among us because friends, Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!!! EVERY morning is Easter morning. Thanks be to God.