Easter Sunday Sermon

Our text this evening (or morning, or afternoon, depending on when you are watching) comes from John, the 20th chapter, verses 10-18. \*Read here\*

By Jesus saying, “Do not hold on to me,” we can infer that that is exactly what Mary did. And I want to suggest to you that Jesus’s statement not to hold on to him, was not a statement that she had done something wrong; it was a statement, simply, that at this critical moment she (and Jesus, too) had other work to do, because life was going on.

Someone said that to me recently, “Life goes on.” How did they mean it? It depends on how you say:

* \*with a shrug:\* “Life goes on”—It could be a statement relativizing the troubles of the current situation. In other words, nothing new under the sun.
* It could be said as a statement of trust and hope in the future. Life *will* go on.
* It could be a pessimistic statement about the indifference of the universe. Life—cold, evolutionary life—does not care about what we are facing.

Life certainly does go on, for us, too. I was listening to a YouTube video put out by John Krasinski (Jim from the television show “The Office”) titled “Some Good News”, in which he asks people to send him good news, and he broadcasts that good news for people in the midst of this trying time. And some of what was shown was simply life going on: people were getting engaged and celebrating wedding anniversaries; a 15 year old was coming home from her last cancer treatment to a huge “socially distanced” welcome party. Friends, life is going on as gardening goes on; trees are in full blossom right now, and peas and flowers are popping up through the earth. Life goes on as laundry goes on. Life goes on as schools move to online classrooms (God help us). Life goes on.

But what if life goes on in a deeper, more mystical, more powerful way?

1 Peter 4:19 tells us that “through the Spirit Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison.” The Creed says that after he died, he descended into Hell.

Friends, Jesus called himself the Resurrection and the Life. The Scriptures tell us that he is the Author of Life.

So while everyone was sleeping that Saturday evening, while his friends were weeping that Saturday evening, Life and the Author of Life was down in the very pits of Hell, busting open its gates, and pulling people out of the fires, out of the darkness, into light and eternal life. Life certainly was going on that Saturday evening.

And Life is certainly happening now. “Your life,” Paul tells us in Colossians, “is hidden with Christ in God.” Your spiritual life, who you are at the deepest level of your being, the part of you that animates and gives life to every other part of you “is hidden with Christ in God.” And what are we? Who are we? 1 John says this:

*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies themselves, just as Christ is pure.*

I am bringing a message to you, today, not from a big church building (well, I am at the church’s office building), not from our large, beautiful sanctuary, nor from our small, elegant chapel, but from my office, because I believe God is calling us back to simplicity. I believe God is calling us back to the foundation of our faith: to Jesus Christ, to faith in God, to God’s grace living and active in our lives *wherever we are*. As Bishop T.D. Jakes said recently, “It’s not about the building. It’s not about the building. It never *was* about the building!”

I wonder whether I would have been there with Mary, with no pageantry, no choir, no robes, no Easter lilies, no bells, nothing but the clothes I put on that morning, and a longing in my heart—would I have been there?

I can’t say so, but I hope so. At least that’s where I want to end up: with Mary, clinging to Jesus.

As the old hymn says,

*I need thee every hour  
Most gracious Lord  
No tender voice like thine  
Can peace afford*

*I need thee oh I need thee  
Every hour I need thee  
Oh bless me now my savior  
I come to thee*

*I need thee every hour  
Stay thou near by  
Temptations loose their power  
When thou art nigh*

*I need thee every hour,*

*In joy or pain;*

*Come quickly and abide,*

*Or life is vain.*

*I need thee every hour,*

*Teach me thy will,*

*And thy rich promises*

*In me fulfill.*

*I need thee oh I need thee  
Every hour I need thee  
Oh bless me now my savior  
I come to thee*

I need Jesus in suffering and in joy.

I need him in sickness and in health.

I need him in confusion and in clarity.

I need him in defeat and in victory.

I need him in sin, and I need him in holiness.

I need him ev’ry hour. I need him all the time.

When, like Mary Magdalene, we cling to Jesus, and our relationship to him isn’t a casual thing, not a fling, we will know the Peace of saying, “Life goes on. Life goes on. Life most certainly does go on.” Which is something akin to saying, “Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Allelulia!”

Cling to Jesus, friends, cling to Jesus. For he is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.