

**WHAT ROCK ARE YOU HIDING UNDER
B. HULL SOMERS – EASTER 2018 – BLC**

Isaiah 25:6-9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Mark 16:1-8

If we were to go outside right now and find a large boulder and two or three of us muscled it over to expose what was underneath, we would send a lot of critters scurrying. As a child growing up in the woods of the Pacific Northwest making forts that often required rocks, I learned this early. We would pick up a rock and then jump back because of the worm, spider, beetle or all three that was using it for cover. There is always something using a rock for cover and it is not always pretty.

Perhaps this is why the saying, “living under a rock” means being out of touch and purposefully unaware. Someone who has missed the obvious could be asked, “What rock have you been hiding under?” I think it is because, if you live under a rock, you do not see what is happening anywhere else to

anyone else. The dark, hard underbelly of the rock becomes the sky, the confined space the only possibility, the heaviness of what holds you down, the surest gravity.

What rock are you hiding under?

Our Isaiah text this morning is a beautiful prophesy of the resurrection to a people hiding under rocks. In it, the king hosts a feast – all are welcome. Walks of life that typically do not socialize together find themselves at the same table – oppressors and oppressed, powerful and lowly, native and foreigner, rich and poor, included and excluded. To those in the ancient Middle East hearing this prophesy, they would understand that this meal was meant to assert the power and kindness of the king. It would have reminded them of the king's ability to bring equality by bringing all to the table to share in the blessing.

The amazing feast of delicious food and the best wine, however, was not the end of the story. This was a people who, like us, tended to live under rocks.

After satisfying their hunger, God began to do miraculous work amongst the diverse folk gathered at the common table. First, God swallows up the shroud that covers all people. This shroud refers to the things that folk use to protect themselves and hide – their rocks. God swallowed it up, truly equalizing the people by allowing them all to sit together without masks, division, or protection.

When everything is stripped away, we are all simply children of God.

Not stopping there, God then swallowed up death, wiping away every tear and disgrace. The fact that there were tears and disgrace to wipe away reminds us how poignantly the folk

gathered were dealing with grief. We can relate. Although today we have longer life expectancy than they did, lower infant and child mortality rate, and cures for many of the things that would be a death sentence to a person in the ancient Middle East, we still have not found a cure for death. Every one of us will one day face final goodbyes and regardless of how universal, it is deep grief.

But in the meal representing the resurrection, God swallowed up the rocks used to hide and then God swallowed death itself, so that all humanity could be free. The people responded with praise, “This is our God, we trusted Him and He has saved us.”

What rock are you hiding under?

The Apostle Paul, in our first Corinthians text reflected on how he once hid under the rock of judgment, legalism and

violence. As he testified to the resurrection, he reminds the reader that he was completely unworthy of the benefits of the new life that Jesus gives. He was a persecutor of Christians, he was self-righteous and hard as the rock that he hid under. But in our text he shows what it looks like to be laid bare and trust in the God of the resurrection. Sins confessed, weakness on display and the grace of God in full effect.

What rock are you hiding under?

Finally, we come to the Gospel. In it we find the women who had watched Jesus bleed out – including his own mother. These ladies were among the few who had the courage to bear witness and stay with Jesus. Most of the disciples had scattered by the time Jesus actually died; it was the women and John who stayed. They watched every excruciating detail. It would have been so much easier for them to find a rock and not come out

until it was over, but they did not. Birth and death and all manner of dirty work was women's work in the first century.

When Jesus breathed his last it was the Sabbath and so they were bound by their religious tradition to not do the work of caring for his body. In a terrible turn, they had to allow his body to be stored away before being properly, lovingly prepared. By the time Sunday morning came they were anxious to do the work of preparing the body for burial. They were ready with their balms and spices and arrived at the tomb at daybreak.

What they found was entirely unexpected. The rock had been moved and something incredible, alive and terrifying had been beneath it. They went into the tomb to investigate and found it empty except for "a young man," widely believed to be

an angel, ready to tell the women about the resurrection. “He is not here, he has been raised.”

The emptiness of the tomb, the life that had escaped when the rock was moved away, testified to the amazing possibility of resurrection.

What rock are you hiding under?

The ladies at the tomb that day did not expect it. They expected to find a dead body with crusty blood and rigor mortis stiffened limbs. They expected to have a fresh wave of grief hit them as they tended to the body that had once held so much life and love and healing and grace.

To find nothing but a message of resurrection was disconcerting and – as the Scripture says – terrifying. The women were afraid.

This upending of death seems great and wonderful here among the flowers and the organ music, but on that day it was an enormous shock. It was the rug being pulled out from everything they thought they knew. The reality that they had relied on was no longer holding true and now a new reality was imposed upon them – one in which the old rules did not apply and the new rule was unstoppable life. Disturbingly changing the course of not just their morning, but all of human history. Their hearts beat fast and their breathing grew shallow as they tried desperately to process this information. He has risen. He is alive.

They were filled with amazement and terror.

These women were the first to hear the news that everything had changed. As if they were tiny beetles living in a

universe of darkness when the rock that they had assumed was their sky is removed and they are left terrified and unmoored.

What is the rock you are hiding under this Easter Sunday morning?

Is it your reputation? Your job? Your relationships? Your lies? Your strength and resolve? Your plan? Your grief? Your brokenness? What is it?

Know today that God is lifting it and something new is coming for you.

My favorite poet, Jan Richardson, wrote a poem entitled *Seen* about the promise of the newness that Easter and the rocks being rolled away brings to us. It reads, "You had not imagined that something so empty could fill you to overflowing and now you carry the knowledge like an awful treasure, or like a child that roots itself beneath your heart: how the emptiness

will bear forth a new world that you cannot fathom but on whose edge you stand. So why do you linger? You have seen and so you are already blessed. You have been seen and so you are the blessing. There is no other word you need. There is simply to go and tell. There is simply to begin.”

God has swallowed up death and the rocks that we have used to protect ourselves and has offered up a new, free, joyful astonishing and terrifying new day. So, let us begin. Alleluia.

Amen.

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