

*A Wrinkle in Resurrection*  
Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018

**Sermon Part 1:**

Today is Easter Sunday and it's also – April Fool's Day. That's a rare convergence. The last time Easter fell on April Fool's day was back in 1956 and the next time won't be until 2029. And it got me thinking about fools. A fool can either be a silly person or someone who is easily tricked – who believes things that aren't true. Or that aren't obviously true. Think of people who have been called fools – The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for saying and believing people should be judged by their character, not by the color of their skin; Linda Brown and her parents for saying and believing that schools should not be segregated; Wilbur and Orville Wright for saying and believing they could make a flying machine; Ada Lovelace for saying and believing that she could make a computing machine; Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis for saying and believing that doctors should wash their hands; Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony for saying and believing that women should have the right to vote and Sojourner Truth for saying and believing that right needed to be for all women; and the students who organized the March for our Lives last Saturday for saying and believing that sensible gun laws are possible. These are some of the fools who inspire me – I bet you can come up with your own list of hero fools – or holy fools.

So April 1 is a good day for remembering a great holy fool – Jesus of Nazareth – who taught some really foolish things: that the last shall be first; that the poor and the broken-hearted and the pacifists are the one ones who truly know happiness; that a rich person can buy almost anything except what really matters – the realm of love and justice; that power lay not in the sword but in peace – that you should turn away violence with a joke; and – perhaps most importantly that all people are holy and deserve to be loved and cared for and treated fairly. In his time a lot of that sounded like a joke – and when he wasn't being run out of town by those who didn't like his words, he was often laughed at. Even at the end, when he was arrested, brought before a kangaroo court, sentenced to death, and executed as a traitor to the state, even then, the guards and the governor, the spectators and the Sanhedrin were making fun of him because what he said and who he was seemed ridiculous – as well as terrifying if it were true.

And what happened next if it were true was even more terrifying and ridiculous – because the stories say that Jesus didn't die. What kind of an April Fool's joke is that? As Unitarian Universalists, we understand the story that Jesus

died and lived again maybe not as something literally true, something we can prove happened, but as a way of talking about the way his crazy teachings lived on in other people.

In his song *Lord of the Dance* Sydney Carter imagined Jesus as the Lord or Leader of a Dance, the dance of life. But it's not just Jesus: Sydney Carter wrote, "I see Christ as the incarnation of the piper who is calling us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality. By Christ I mean not only Jesus; in other times and places, other planets, there may be other Lords of the Dance. But Jesus is the one I know of first and best. I sing of the dancing pattern in the life and words of Jesus." And he was inspired to write the song not just by Jesus but by an image of the Hindu god Shiva as a dancer – it doesn't matter how we name it or who is leading it – what matters is the dance and that the dance didn't stop with Jesus and the dance won't stop with us. We are all a part of the dance and the dance goes on.

So now we're going to celebrate the dance of life – the choir is going to sing Sydney Carter's song and the rest of us will join in on the chorus. And those who want to add dance – to embody the dance we are celebrating – can join in at the end in a circle dance.

### Readings:

from *A Wind in the Door* by Madeleine L'Engle, p. 231

*Be!*  
*Be, butterfly and behemoth,*  
*be galaxy and grasshopper,*  
*star and sparrow,*  
*you matter,*  
*you are,*  
*be!*  
*Be caterpillar and comet,*  
*Be porcupine and planet,*  
*sea sand and solar system,*  
*sing with us,*  
*dance with us,*  
*rejoice with us,*  
*for the glory of creation,*  
*seagulls and seraphim*

*angle worms and angel host,  
chrysanthemum and cherubim....*

*Be!  
Sing for the glory  
of the living and the loving  
the flaming of creation  
sing with us  
dance with us  
be with us.  
Be!"*

*Mark 16:1-8 (International Children's Bible)*

16 The day after the Sabbath day, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought some sweet-smelling spices to put on Jesus' body. 2 Very early on that day, the first day of the week, the women were on their way to the tomb. It was soon after sunrise. 3 They said to each other, "There is a large stone covering the entrance of the tomb. Who will move the stone for us?"

4 Then the women looked and saw that the stone was already moved. The stone was very large, but it was moved away from the entrance. 5 The women entered the tomb and saw a young man wearing a white robe. He was sitting on the right side, and the women were afraid.

6 But the man said, "Don't be afraid. You are looking for Jesus from Nazareth, the one who was killed on a cross. He has risen from death. He is not here. Look, here is the place they laid him. 7 Now go and tell his followers and Peter, 'Jesus is going into Galilee. He will be there before you. You will see him there as he told you before.'"

8 The women were confused and shaking with fear. They left the tomb and ran away. They did not tell anyone about what happened, because they were afraid

## **Sermon Part II**

I am always happy when this passage from Mark's gospel comes around in the lectionary cycle for Easter. A lot of my colleagues of a variety of traditions don't

like to preach on it and will choose a telling of the Easter story from a different gospel author, because, you may have noticed, Mark's version leaves out any encounter with the resurrected Jesus. In all the other versions Mary Magdalene, sometimes alone, sometimes with other women disciples, meet Jesus. But Mark's version ends with the tomb empty and the women afraid. Not exactly an uplifting Easter message you might think. And in fact future transcribers and editors of Mark's story showed how much they didn't like it by adding three separate stories of Jesus meeting his friends and sharing good news with them. If you look at a Bible, you can see the stories tacked on after the passage we just heard. But Mark didn't write them. He ended his good news of Jesus Christ – those are the opening words to his book – he ended his good news not with the good news of a Christ risen and gone to heaven but with an empty tomb and the strange words of the angels: Tell them to go to Galilee. He will see them there.

I love Mark's version because unlike the others, it's not about Jesus' resurrection; it's about the disciples' resurrection, their putting right what they got wrong and so being offered new life. And if it's about their resurrections, their chance to put things right, then it's also about our resurrections and our chance to put things right. Mark's gospel is a good news for Unitarian Universalists who don't believe Jesus was a once and done savior because it portrays Jesus as teaching his disciples all the ways the fullness of life is open to each of us – including the chance to try again.

And Jesus' friends, his disciples needed the chance to try again. In Mark's gospel he makes a point of showing how over and over they had misunderstood what Jesus was offering them. Sometimes they thought Jesus was a warrior king who was going to overthrow the Roman oppressor and set Israel free. Sometimes they thought he was a magician who could cast a spell and make everything good again. Over and over they refused to hear or to see or to understand that he was trying to tell them that they had the power to set themselves free – that freedom wasn't something that could be handed them, but an on-going dance they needed to participate in. But it's a lot easier – at least in the short run – to wait and wish for someone to do this for you. And when Jesus didn't do what they'd thought he was going to do, when he didn't make everything safe and happy, they got angry. They ran away. One of them turned him in to the authorities. His best friend Peter even said three times that he didn't know Jesus – had never met the man. They closed themselves off from love and hope and connection - everything Jesus had given his life to teaching – and closed themselves off in fear and anger.

They are a lot like Meg Murry in *A Wrinkle in Time*. How many of you have read Madeleine L'Engle's book or seen the movie? After I saw the movie a couple weeks ago, I went back and re-read the book. For those of you who don't know, it's about a family, the Murrys. The father and mother are physicists, experimenting with the idea that it's possible to travel through time and space. Before the book begins, the father has disappeared in one of those experiments. He's been gone four years and a lot of people have given up the hope that he's ever coming back. His family still hopes, but it's been hard for them. The mother is left to continue the work and also raise four children on her own. The oldest child, Meg, who is 12, especially misses her father. She doesn't fit in at school, where she's smart in math and science but not in people skills. Some of her problems come from the normal changes of adolescence, but some come from her anger at her father's absence and all that his loss has brought. She feels that if her father were home again all would instantly be well; and only when he's home again, can all be instantly well. So she has no incentive to try to adjust, to make things better for herself or her family, because in her mind, she has no power. She can only wait for her father to return.

And then three beings – or witches – or space aliens – or angels – from another planet – Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, appear, and take Meg and her little brother Charles Wallace, and her friend Calvin, on a journey to find and save her father. As I re-read the book, I was struck by Meg's isolation and passivity. Though on one level it's a story of adventure and rescue, it's also – like any great book – the story of the transformation of an individual. For things only begin to change for the better when Meg realizes that her father can't make everything safe and happy, that she has to act for her own good and that of others, and that she doesn't have to do this by herself. In fact, the climactic moment comes when Meg offers love in the face of hate, not self-generated love, but love which is flowing through her, love which comes to her from her family and those three alien angels and by virtue of her own just being. Love.

This is the good news the angels offer to the women at the empty tomb and that they, beyond the bounds of the story, offered to the other disciples. Love – love which calls them back into their stories as actors, spreaders of the good news of the power of love, beings of love incarnate, as Jesus was and every other dancer of Life. And this good news comes to us also, inviting us into the dance, into the story, carrying on the love, the life, the power which have flowed through the ages to us and which will flow beyond us to ages yet to come. We are part of this cosmic dance, a dance of fools, perhaps, but a dance which cannot be stopped, a dance which will never die. This is the good news of Easter – that Easter is us.

So as Meg proclaims in the sequel to *A Wrinkle in Time*, let us

*Be!*

*Sing for the glory  
of the living and the loving  
the flaming of creation  
sing with us  
dance with us  
be with us.*

*Be!*