



August 3, 2021

Our Bodies are Precious to God

By The Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker

The human body is an amazing thing. From watching professional sports teams to cheering on Olympic competitors, we can see how people move and bend and stretch their bodies to the limit. It is incredible.

Yet, as we know, the human body has limits. As we age, we find our bodies a bit harder to move. Muscles and joints ache. Bones break. Bodies are diagnosed with cancer, dementia, and other diseases. Nonetheless, through all of it, the body remains precious to God and integral to our entire being.

Today, August 3rd, in the Episcopal Church, we celebrate the feast day of the myrrh-bearing women, the three women who, following Jesus' crucifixion, came to the tomb to bring spices for Jesus' body (Mark 16:1-8). Women were the first ones there. They arrived at the tomb because they believed it was important to be there, to care for the Lord's precious body.

They likely began to realize that Jesus was truly dead. The one they had followed had been crucified, and his body rested in a sealed tomb. The

spices they brought were meant to stave off the decay and smell that would have begun to set in. But as we know, when the women arrived at the tomb, Jesus was not there. There was no body lying in the tomb. It was empty.

A man dressed in white was there, a messenger of God, who told them,

“Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him” (Mark 16:6).

Then in Mark’s Gospel, we are told the women fled in terror and amazement. They were prepared to find a body bloody and beaten, and instead, discovered that Jesus had defeated death itself. He had risen in his very body, and they were the first to hear of it.

We often talk about bodies as if they are temporal. In society and even in the Church, we often talk about bodies and souls as disconnected. Because bodies can be broken and burdensome, we want to be able to leave them behind when we die. We often want to fly far away from them.

Yet, what we learn from Scripture is that our bodies are not left behind. Jesus rose in his body, and yet, it also seemed different, newer. He bore the scars of crucifixion in his hands and side (John 20:27), but could also walk through doors in his new body (John 20:26).

The truth is, there is nothing we need to fear. Our bodies, too, will be healed and renewed in the Resurrection. We will be raised in them to see the Lord face-to-face. We don’t know every detail about how it happens, and that is okay; we don’t need to know right now.

What we learn from the women at the tomb is that bodies are holy. They are precious. They are important to God. After all, God came to us in a body, physical human body, born through the body of his blessed mother Mary. In his life, Jesus touched. He healed. He restored people to life in their own bodies.

Following Jesus’ death, the women at the tomb arrived to care for his body; likewise, we are to care for one another. In caring for one another, we realize that we, too, are vulnerable. We are limited. We cannot always

control what happens to us, and yet, it is through vulnerability that God chose to come. It is through our vulnerability that Christ gives us strength (2 Corinthians 12:10).

What we also know is that the women did eventually spread the good news: the news of Jesus rising from the dead, defeating sin and death, and giving us the same gift of new life in return, to experience even now.

We can be grateful for the women and their witness today as we sit with our own bodies – bodies that may amaze us sometimes. They may frustrate us sometimes. But they are holy, and beautiful, and special to God.

Let us pray the Collect for the Feast Day of Joanna, Mary, and Salome, from [*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*](#).

Almighty God, who revealed the resurrection of your Son to Joanna, Mary, and Salome as they faithfully came bearing myrrh to his tomb: Grant that we too may perceive the presence of the risen Lord in the midst of pain and fear, and go forth proclaiming his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

To all our readers: the next issue of *Simple Gifts* will be Tuesday, September 7, 2021. Until then, stay safe and "be swift to love and make haste to be kind."