



## "THE SEARCH IS OVER" – MATTHEW 28:5-6

*Resurrection Sunday*

*By: Minister Barbara Florvil*

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At the 89<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards, Actress Viola Davis became the first Black woman to ever win a Triple Crown of Acting – an Emmy, an Oscar and a Tony award. Her Oscar-worthy acceptance speech for Best Actress in a Supporting Role can attest to this well-deserved honor and rare achievement in the entertainment industry. Davis said this:

“You know, there's one place that all the people with the greatest potential are gathered. One place. And that's the graveyard. People ask me all the time: 'What kind of stories do you want to tell, Viola?' And I say exhume those bodies. Exhume those stories. The stories of the people who dreamed big, and never saw those dreams to fruition. People who fell in love and lost. I became an artist and thank God I did because we are the only profession that celebrates what it means to live a life.”

Perhaps, this is where we find an unsuspecting Mary and the other Mary in our text, early on a Sunday morning, at the beginning of an exhumation. They thought they were preparing to anoint the body of their Savior with spices, in fact, they were preparing for the celebration of Life. Very early on a Sunday morning, they thought they were heading to the grave of their hopes and instead, were heading to the new birthplace for all of humanity- a borrowed tomb and a reclaimed destiny.

Can you imagine what their early morning walk to the tomb was like? I imagine silent- each woman holding tight to her spices and consumed by her thoughts. Maybe Mary began to recall her first encounter with the angel Gabriel, who told her to “fear not” and to name her miracle baby, Jesus; or maybe she touched her belly, both to console herself and to recall the moment Elizabeth’s baby John jumped inside of her at the sound of Mary’s voice. I imagine it was not lost on her that it was around that same time of year, about 20 years earlier, when she and Joseph lost the Messiah during the Festival of the Passover.

After three days of searching, Mary finds a young Jesus unbossed and unbothered in the temple. When she asked, “Child, why have you treated us like this?”, Jesus responded with the more important question-“why were you searching for me?”- a question that Mary might have treasured in her heart all those years. Here she is, on the third day since his crucifixion, why had she been looking for him, really? She may have been looking for Jesus the way people search for hope and purpose in places they had once seen it or search for remnants of a dream deferred under the hot sun. Mary had been looking for Jesus even after watching him die because she had some spices for the preservation of his body and possibly, the preservation of the hope that life could be different.

Little did Mary know that an angel would crash their search party with the sound of an earthquake and an invitation. Once they arrived at the tomb, the Bible says that the earth shook, an angel rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel then says “do not be afraid, I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” The announcement followed an invitation for the weary and the heavy laden: He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said! Now, why don’t you come and see the place where the Lord laid.

Come see! Come, you brokenhearted, see where Jesus laid down your burdens. Come, you disappointed and dejected, and see where Jesus laid his head down for the last time. Come see the temporary rest that ended all eternal death. Come see where your fears died. Come see where hopelessness died and death lost its sting. I know you have been searching for him- but let me also show you where he is not. Jesus is no longer where the enemy thinks he has the final say over God’s children. Come and see where Jesus is not- Jesus is no longer in a borrowed tomb nor does he have to be born in a borrowed manger, for he owns life and death. “He is not here! For he has risen as he said!”

For those of us like Mary, who may be searching for hope, we need to see where Jesus is no longer. We also need to be reminded of what he said. The phrase, “for he has risen, *as he said*” serves as that reminder. “As he said” serves as a call to remember that Jesus has already said this. Jesus has already prepared you for this. No matter what you are going through in life, Jesus implores you to remember what he said. He knew the blinding nature of grief, tragedy, and trauma can often cause

us to forget what has been said in peacetime, even by the Prince of Peace, himself. Despite your pain and fear, can you remember what Jesus said to you? Do you remember how Jesus has already prepared you? Not only has Jesus already said that he would rise but he has prepared us for it!

Jesus was preparing the people when he caused Lazarus to be raised from the dead in John 11. Jairus's daughter would also tell you that resurrection was possible, when everyone thought she was dead and Jesus came on the scene to declare she was only asleep. In Luke 7, on his way through a town called Nain, Jesus prepared us for his resurrection by raising the son of a widow in the middle of his funeral procession. In the New Testament alone, resurrection was not unprecedented before Resurrection Sunday. Knowing that he would be killed, and that we would all be searching for God in that midst of uncertainty, Jesus prepared us for hope. Jesus showed us, while we are on the journey with him, that his word will never come back to him void even as we search for him now. Even when we can't see him, even when we can't feel him, we can trust what he said. We can trust his promises. We can trust his word. We can trust that when he said "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" that the Temple will be raised. We can trust that when he said to Martha, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" that he would embody resurrection and life even when death came.

In this passage, the angel goes on to say to the women looking for Jesus, "then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." Verse eight tells us that "the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples." On the way to finding Jesus, the women found their purpose. At the beginning of this passage, they thought their job was to find Jesus and anoint his body. By the end of the passage, they would learn their true call and purpose was to tell the disciples the good news. They found their purpose to exhume an empty grave by preaching the gospel. Much like these women, it is on our way to finding Jesus that we find our purpose and our call. Furthermore, just like these women, we may come across our call "afraid yet filled with joy." Somewhere between our fear and our joy, we find our purpose. Somewhere between our fear and our joy, we hear our call. And it is somewhere between our fear and our joy that we must pursue and complete the divine assignment we have been given. For some of us it is to preach. For others of us, it is to sing or dance or act. For some of us, it is to invent. For some of us, it is to write. For others of us, it is to cure. For all of us, it is to give all of what we have unto the glory of God. For all of us,

to live out our purpose and to do it scared and yet filled with joy.

I do not know what your purpose is but don't run away from it because you have a sense of fear accompanying your sense of joy and possibility. Run to it. I would like to suggest that God gives us life so that we can live so that we can die empty, not fearless, but empty. I would like to submit that we ought to die so empty that there will be no "potential" left in us; empty because we poured out everything we had; empty because we accomplished our purpose and completed our assignment. We are to die so empty that when they come back to mourn over you, the angels will be sitting on your tombstone saying with a chuckle and a smile, "she is not here" and the ancestors will thunder from heaven, "he is not there". They will say "stop mourning here, go back and read her books, go ahead and marvel at his medical breakthroughs, read their supreme court opinions on landmark cases, speak to her students, admire his architecture and watch their movies." Our assignment is to preach the gospel with our lives and to do it "afraid and yet filled with joy."

As they left to tell the disciples, the Bible says, "suddenly, Jesus met them." Even with the grandeur of an angel, the mystery of a rolled back stone, and with the assignment that will change their lives and the world forever, their search was not over until they met their Savior. Our search does not end with the powerful moments that point to Jesus. It does not end with us living out our purpose. It does not even end by sharing the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Our search ends with Jesus himself. Our search for fulfillment ends when we meet Jesus face to face. Our search for wholeness ends at the sight of our risen savior. Our search for healing ends when we see the face of the one who stole the keys to hell with holes in his hands. Our search for hope ends when we behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. When we are at his feet worshipping him, the search ends and it ends suddenly. There's no more weeping and or crying there. There is fullness of joy in his presence. There is grace undeserved and peace forevermore.

The search for salvation is over because he was bruised for our iniquities.

The search for peace is over because the chastisement of our peace was upon him.

The search for healing is over because by his stripes we are healed.

The search for life is over because The Resurrection and the Life himself has risen, as he said!

Come see the place where the Lord laid!

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT THERE BUT YOUR PAST.

THERE'S NOTHING THERE BUT YOUR SINS.

THERE'S NOTHING THERE BUT YOUR HURT.

BUT, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF WHAT YOU EXPECTED, THERE YOU WILL FIND  
YOUR PURPOSE

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR PAIN, THERE YOU WILL FIND POSSIBILITY

ON OTHER SIDE OF THE ROLLED BACK STONE, THERE YOU WILL FIND YOUR  
SAVIOR for the search is finally over.

Never again, will we have to search for the one who will save us. He has risen.

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**Minister Barbara Florvil** is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Child Development at Tufts University in Medford, MA. She serves as the Assistant to the Pastor for Children and Youth at the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, VA, under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley.