

“Ope, you’re still on mute.” If I had a dollar for the number of times that sentence has come out of my mouth this year, I’d probably be well on my way to a fully funded post-Covid vacation. If you throw in there a dollar for the number of times *we all* have heard some sort of variation on that sentence... “I think you’re still muted,” “Hit your mute button,” “Nope...still muted,” I think we would all be winging our way to Disney World with zero concerns about cost. Hundreds of Zoom meetings later and without a fail, a year in, we’re all still wrestling with our mute buttons.

It’s kind of amusing at this point really, the different ways in which that one little button has changed how we interact with each other. You’ve got the people who sit on meetings and *refuse* to mute, so you hear absolutely everything that goes on behind them. You’ve got the people who don’t realize they’re unmuted or have forgotten to mute when they sign in and accidentally say something for everyone to hear. Hands down happen to me a couple of weeks ago in class. I had signed in, didn’t realize I wasn’t muted and my sister signed on, and silly me said right out loud, “Oh, Jenn looks cute!” to which our professor chuckled and said, “Sisterly love right there.” I was simultaneously embarrassed and unbelievably grateful that I hadn’t said something like, “Oof, Jenn looks *rough*,” because then I would have been in multiple kinds of trouble. You’ve got those moments in

meetings where you've been signaled to speak and suddenly the mute button is the most impossible thing to find ever and everyone watches you fumble trying to unmute. It's even become this like universal signal for, hey, I want to say something. You see someone pop off of mute and you realize they want to jump it. And we've all had those moments like I started with, where we or someone else is just talking and talking and talking with zero realization that no one can hear us because...we're still on mute. It's kind of amazing actually how in a year's time something like that can become such a part of our everyday life. Zoom, the mute button, the slings and arrows of virtual meetings are just who we are...and we simultaneously long for the days when we're all just around a table talking, while also probably being quietly thankful that the mute button helps keep things a bit quieter.

Now...I obviously realize that life in Ancient Israel was thousands of years away from the joys of technology and the infinite wonder that is our life on Zoom. However, if we were to imagine today's gospel playing out on a computer screen, on a Zoom meeting, well, there would be several pictures that are just having an impossible time unmuting, who can't seem to find that mute button, and you can imagine the Holy Spirit, the angels saying over and over again, "Nope, still on mute. Try again." And even after

they've tried again it's the same thing, "Nope, still on mute." And that meeting is left in nothing but silence.

More than anything, silence is what seems to pervade the resurrection story this morning. You can imagine that in these earliest hours of the dawn, as Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James make their way to the tomb they didn't have a whole lot to say. What *was* there to say when they were all acutely aware of what they were up so early to do? Who wants to have just casual conversation when you're on your way to the tomb of the man you thought was your Messiah? No one is talking about how their Passover dinner was or how their grandkids are when the crushing reality of Jesus' death was still far too real, far too potent to even begin to try and fathom. These woman, just like so many in and around Jerusalem, would have felt like they had lost everything...their hope, their salvation, their friend, their teacher, their sense of peace. Everything just gone...so senselessly, so irrevocably. For them, these footsteps they are taking are taking them to a tomb that will do nothing but remind them that things have gone catastrophically wrong and that everything they had hoped for has crumbled to pieces. If that wasn't enough, just the simple, honest truth of their palpable grief over Jesus *himself* had to have been enough to render them all mute. They knew him, loved him, cared for him, spent time with

him. He wasn't just Jesus the Messiah, he was Jesus their friend and he's just gone. So who wants to chit chat when their hearts are broken?

That silence is only shattered by the dawning realization of logistics. You can see them all walking along, each caught up in their own thoughts before one of them jars awake, her voice a clamor amongst the quiet, "The stone...who will roll away the stone?" Normal, everyday details breaking into their reflections because sometimes you have to unmute to deal with the questions that need answering, even if no one wants to think about those questions. From there it's a bit of a flurry of voices, them talking through how to handle the stone, their realization and questions when they see it's already rolled back, their fear when they see the young man, his voice echoing around the empty tomb with words they probably don't know how to process, "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here..." It's like everyone has unmuted all at once and is talking over one another because how do you process this kind of information? What do you mean he's not here? What do you mean he's been raised? Yes! We're looking for Jesus! Where is he? I don't get it. How can this be? Who are you and *what is going on?*

None of these questions get answered. The only voice that dominates the silence is that of this young man. He tells the women that the time for

silence is over, they have to leave this place, they have to exit the tomb, let go of their fear, and go tell the disciples, tell Peter that Jesus is on the move. The disciples need to know that Jesus is on his way to Galilee and that he will meet all of them there. They have to come out of hiding and go meet him, they have to witness the resurrection. If the disciples are going to do that, the women have to tell them, they have to get the message out. They have to unmute and *go*, go spread the good news.

But...after all that noise...all that talking...the silence returns. The women put their mute buttons back on and flee in terror. They don't tell anyone anything. They are so afraid that they can do nothing but stay silent. And you can imagine the angel going, "No, ladies, you're still on mute." But they don't care. Their feet carry them from the tomb and all is quiet.

Maybe it seems strange to us, this silence. Maybe it makes us too want to get our Zoom shoes on and go, no, no you're still muted. The mute button! We need to hear what you have to say! But Mark keeps his story on mute at the end...on purpose. It's hard to remember, but way back at the beginning of Advent, when John the Baptist emerged out of the wilderness, Mark's gospel started this way, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The beginning...Mark knows he's not writing the whole story, he's just writing the start. Mark knows that in order for the end

of this story to be written someone else...his readers, those who hear his gospel read aloud...they have to be the ones to carry on the story, to proclaim it, and send it out into the world, because as his story says, if they don't? No one else will and Jesus' resurrection will simply be...silent. Mark ends his gospel by basically saying, everyone else is staying on mute, so if *you* don't tell the story, no one else will! So now you have to go, you have to not be afraid, you have to be the one to share the good news.

But this isn't just some generic *you*. This isn't a you that is left to linger in the ancient world. This is *us*. *We* are the ones that now have to go and not be afraid and share the good news. Because that's the thing, the message, the hope of the resurrection isn't just for us. The good news of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God isn't something we get to hoard and keep all to ourselves. No, the very point of being the ones who have *heard* the good news is so that we can then go out and *share* the good news. But I think sometimes that's where we get stuck, because we think it is all just for us. We think that God's love, God's hope, God's salvation, God's mercy is just for us, our tiny, little circle of comfort and no one else needs it, deserves it, wants it, fill in your appropriate verb.

Think about how badly you needed to hear the message of resurrection this morning. Maybe you needed to hear the very real promise

of eternal life, for you, for your loved ones. Maybe you needed to hear the very real promise of God's unending, unchangeable love for you, exactly as you are. Maybe you needed to hear the very real promise of hope, hope that God is always making all things new, that God can change just about anything. Maybe you needed to hear the very real promise of grace, grace that breathes even into a world that crucified its Lord. Maybe you needed to hear the very real promise of abundant life, abundant life that is for you and for all of God's children, that cannot be held back or held down. Now if you needed to hear those things so badly, imagine the other people who need to hear it too. Imagine who else needs that message. Who is going to tell them? Who is going to be not afraid and go out and proclaim the good news that Christ is risen and God loves the world with a fierce, relentless kind of love that knows no bounds and no partiality?

If not us, then who? If not us who have heard this good news and had it change our hearts and lives? If not us who have known what it is to need this message so badly? Today is just the beginning, the beginning of the good news of Jesus of Nazareth, the *resurrected* Son of God. The story doesn't end here. It can't. It doesn't end it with us. It *starts* with us. So, my fellow resurrection people...it's time...it's time to share the good news. It's time to start talking. It's time to unmute. **AMEN!!!**