

Resurrection of the Lord / Easter Morning at Sunrise  
April 24, 2011  
Room In The Inn  
Jeff Moles

"The Song Inside"

*Matthew 28:1-10 (Common English Bible)*

*After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." <sup>8</sup>So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

When I was in somewhere around the first grade, some relatives gave my family a piano. It was a big upright grand piano that I'm not sure we ever had tuned. It was missing some keys, the pedals didn't work, and several of the keys stuck most of the time. It was covered with scratches and imperfections, but it mostly did its job and gave me the opportunity to explore my talents at an early age. I found that I could sit down and peck out the melodies I heard, songs I heard on tv, or that my dad would play on his guitar, or, mainly, the hymns we would sing in church. I was always the kid who was turning pencils and a bucket into a set of drums and sticks. I would get in trouble in the first grade for singing during nap time when I could hear the kindergarten class nearby singing their songs.

A moment that remains vivid in my mind's eye happened a year or two after receiving that piano. I was at our church's "Hanging of the Greens" event, when we would get together each year to decorate the church for Christmas. We were hanging around after the festivities as my parents helped clean up. I was sitting with some friends near the piano in our fellowship hall and I started to play. I played "Jingle Bells," if I remember correctly. As I played the last few notes, I heard a noise that paralyzed me a little, the 3,000 or so people in the room (ok, maybe it was more like 30, but it felt like 3,000 in the moment) had stopped what they were doing and clapped for me. They were being supportive, as they should have been, as my church family. But I didn't plan on anybody listening to me play Jingle Bells that evening. I felt a fear creep over me in reaction to their applause. I didn't want to be in the spotlight, I didn't want to have to share what was coming from deep inside of me.

In that moment I remember pledging to myself that I would never again play the piano in public. Music would be something I would enjoy for myself. It would be a world I could escape to, a world that was just for me. Now many of you have heard me play the piano, so you know I didn't keep that promise forever, but for several years after that traumatic Jingle Bells incident, I only played music in the safety and security of my own home.

A tomb can be a safe, quiet place. It is a place of protection from the world, a place of insulation. It is a place of darkness, of death.

Maybe some of you know what I am talking about.

- Maybe some of us have built tombs around ourselves when we feel like we've been rejected. Relationships have been broken, fights have been won and lost, and families have been broken. We have built tombs of protection from other people, isolating ourselves.
- Others of us have buried ourselves in tombs when we felt like we didn't fit in. The hurtful words and judging glances of others forced us inside to a life of hiding.
- Some of us have faced profound hurts and carry wounds that still bleed. Addictions have been our tombs, hiding us from having to deal with our real problems.
- Many of us have come into this world in tombs already made for us by the world. These tombs keep people who aren't powerful from disturbing the structures of society. These are the tombs where we can keep those whose race and gender, and class and orientation we don't value.
- Still others of us live in tombs built of our many possessions. We live in privilege and can insulate ourselves from suffering if we only buy enough, if we turn our homes into fortresses of individualism, protecting ourselves and our property from those in the outside world.

The thing about the stories of Jesus is that they are not meant to be just read and studied. They are meant to be lived. We are called to be the presence of Christ in this world of tombs. And if the story of our faith is that Jesus not only died, but lives again, then we are called to come out of the tomb with Jesus.

The hard part about living this story is that the world around us is not oriented toward Easter. No, the world around us is stuck on Good Friday, a day of death and despair. The world we walk into from the tomb is dangerous, violent, unequal, noisy, and chaotic. It is a world in which the bottom 50% of people own only 1% of the world's assets. It is a world where people are divided and exploited based on their race. It is a world that tells women that they are less powerful, less competent than men. It is a world where war is the means to economic growth. This Good Friday world is enough to make the tomb seem like a pretty good place to be.

But that's not where Jesus leads us. He doesn't lead us back in, he tells us to come out, to carry the burdens of the world, to engage his world that is upside down.

Jesus described to us his Easter life throughout his life and ministry. It sounds something like this:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What an upside down world.

When I wouldn't play the piano outside of my home, I had built myself a tomb. God had given me a wonderful gift, a gift that wasn't just meant for me. You see, music *is* a great place of escape for me, it *is* something that is a gift for myself. But there is nothing like the feeling I've had when I've been able to share it with others. There is nothing like the experience of meeting God in worship through music, enabling others to use their voices. What an experience of resurrection, of coming out of the tomb, I have when I share what is inside me with others.

This reminds me of a poem that I heard several years ago. Dr. James Forbes was for many years the pastor of The Riverside Church in New York City. He wrote this poem and often used it in his sermons. It is called "Release Your Song."

There's a song inside of me.  
I can hardly wait to see  
What it is I have to say  
Or the music I will play.  
It's been so long in coming—  
First the thought and then some humming.  
But before I find my key,  
Something stifles it in me.  
What keeps my song from being sung?  
Past hurts, deep fears, a timid tongue?  
What makes my freedom come so hard?  
A self-made, live-in prison guard?  
Meanwhile the song still groans in me.  
I can't be me 'til it is free.  
Debating, hesitating, getting ready to sing,  
The song could die like a stillborn thing.  
"Release your song," said the Spirit to me.  
"Be free! Be free! It's Jubilee!  
Cast out each fearsome song patrol;  
Proclaim deliverance to your soul!"  
The Spirit of life flowed through my blood.  
I said "yes;" something broke;  
It came like a flood.  
Up from within, down from above:  
A kingdom built on the power of love.  
Thank God my song has been set free.  
The rhythm and the words are right for me.  
I'm finally ready to sing out strong.  
My soul is saying, "This is my song!"

This is the essence of our calling. Sing your song. Inside each of us is a song written by our creator. Each of us bears a song that is completely unique and valuable. It is inside of us

regardless of what condition we are in, whether we are rich or poor, whether we are healthy or in a hospital bed, or in prison, or caught in a dead-end job. It is a song that is the life we hold inside of us. It is the song that is the very image of God breathed into us in creation.

It is by singing our song that we come out of the tomb with Jesus, into this broken and fearful world. It is our song—not one of those songs that you sing in your head, but one that you share with the world—that transforms the lives of others.

Even in this Good Friday world we are called to sing our song.

- Release your song to proclaim the good news that Jesus, who was arrested, suffered, and died, has risen. Sing the song of life.
- Release your song as an act of worship, adoring the living Lord. Sing the song of praise.
- Release your song to counteract the evil structures of the world that keep people oppressed and bound. Sing the song of resistance.
- Release your song to fully display your true self to the world, the 'you' God created, and you will help others to sing their songs too. Sing the song of you.
- Release your song with those who need it most, those who are sick, and poor, and imprisoned. Sing the song of struggle.
- Release your song to invite others onto the journey with you in community, in love. Sing the song of harmony.
- Release your song to change the world around you, making it more beautiful, more rich, more meaningful. Sing the song of transformation.
- Release your song because it feels good, because it is fun, because it makes you feel like dancing. Sing the song of joy.

We are called out of our tombs to sing. We are called out of our tombs to release to the world our song, the song of resurrection. Christ is risen from the dead, and so are we! Alleluia! Amen.