



*And Then*  
*An Easter Sermon*  
*Sunday, April 16th, 2017*  
First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois  
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

I remember the morning that my father did not show up for breakfast. It was a Friday and we were supposed to meet for breakfast at a local Denny's restaurant. My mother and his wife of nearly 58 years died early hours of the morning on the previous Monday.

I thought that Dad was running late as sometimes happened as he managed his COPD, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. After waiting about 15 minutes I called the home telephone. No answer. I tried the two cell phones, his and the one that was my mother's. No answer. I figured that he must be on his way so I ordered an omelet. I expected him to walk through the door at any minute. But he didn't.

And then a slow realization came over me. I called my wife and told her that dad did not show up for breakfast and that I was going to the house. She asked if I wanted her to go with me. I told her no, I was pretty sure what I would find.

So, I went to the house and checked the garage. The truck and the car were in place. And then I used my key to open the back door. I found Dad in the hallway. I called Sue and 9-1-1.

And then a sheriff's deputy arrived. And then Sue, and then my brother in law and then my parents ministers and then the funeral home.

Mom's visitation was supposed to be that night. It had to be cancelled. The next day we had a double visitation and a funeral.

And then, four months later their first grandchild was born in Iowa City.

And then ...

There always seems to be an "And Then" in Life. Death never has the last word.

Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb, early in the morning while it was still dark outside and all you could see were shadows. When she arrived at the tomb she saw that the great stone had been rolled away. And then she ran to the disciples--to Simon Peter and to "the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved" and told them what happened.

And then *they* ran to the tomb. The other disciple arrived first. He looked into the tomb and saw the linen wrappings. When Peter arrived he rushed in and saw the wrappings and the cloth that covered Jesus face had been rolled up and set aside.

And then they returned to their homes; one confused and wondering, the other believing, even though the scriptures had not been opened up to them yet.

Mary, too, returned to the tomb. She stood outside weeping. Then bending over she saw something that the two disciples had not seen; two angels sitting where Jesus had laid.

"Woman, why are you crying," they asked.

I don't know if Mary Magdalene ever saw an angel before let alone speak to one, but she told them that someone had taken Jesus' body and she didn't know where they had taken it.

And then, perhaps sensing someone behind her or hearing a noise she turned around and saw a Stranger--the gardener. "Why are you crying," He asked. She told Him the same thing and added, "If you take me to Him I will take Him away."

And then the "gardener" spoke. "Mary."

And then, she recognized Him. "Rabbouni", Teacher. Wanting to hold on to Him she was told that she couldn't for He had not yet ascended. I'm not sure that she understood what that meant but He then told her to go back to the disciples and tell them that He was ascending to the Father, His Father and their Father, His God and their God."

And then she ran. Mary ran back to the disciples and was the first proclaimer of the Good News, "I have seen the Lord."

And then that evening, while the disciples were gathered together in an upper room with the doors and windows shut, because they were afraid of Jesus' enemies, He appeared again. "Peace be with you," He said.

And then He showed them his hands and side. A second time He said "Peace be with you. As the father sent me so I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them. "Receive the Holy Spirit."

And then the disciples told a disciple who was not with them named Thomas. Thomas is the one who said to the others when Jesus said that He was going to return to Jerusalem that they should go with Him to die alongside Him. He replied to the disciples story by saying that he wouldn't believe it until he was able to touch Jesus' wounds.

Well, the next Sunday the disciples were once again gathered in that upper room. And then, Jesus appeared again. This time He spoke to Thomas. "Touch my wounds, put your

hand in my side," He invited. All Thomas could do was fall to his knees and say, "My Lord."

The disciples went back to their nets eventually. And then, early one morning, a Stranger appeared on the shore. He called to them. "Are you catching anything?" When they said they weren't, the Stranger told them to throw their nets on the other side of the boat. Immediately their nets were filled, nearly to the point of breaking.

And then one of the disciples said to Peter, the one who denied Jesus three times, that he thought that the Stranger looked an awful lot like Jesus. Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore while the others brought in the large catch.

Jesus had a fire going and was preparing breakfast. As they ate, three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Three times Peter said that he did; the third time he was deeply grieved, perhaps because he remembered that night to denial or perhaps because he believed that Jesus was not sure of his love.

Jesus charged him to feed and care for the flock, including the lambs.

And then ...

Life is full of "And Thens."

The Easter story is not finished, though. Easter does not end with Easter. We who call ourselves followers of Jesus are an Easter people. *WE* write the next "And Then" through the lives that we lead, the decisions that we make.

What is your "And then"?

To God be the glory. Amen.

And then, well, that is where John's gospel ends. But as I said, Life is full of "And Thens".

We are Jesus' And Then, you and I. We, those of us who take Jesus seriously and walk in His footsteps, we complete His story as we care for His flock; the sheep and the lambs, even the old goats and the cantankerous rams.

We, the Church of Jesus Christ, are the best hope of the world. We write the story with our lives.

So, what is the next "And Then"?

What will *you* write?

To God be the glory. Amen.