

Luke 24:1-12  
**“Look Among the Living”**  
The Rev. Dr. Jean Halligan Vandergrift  
Roslindale Congregational Church, UCC, Roslindale, MA  
Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

*The Reading: Luke 24:1-12*

*On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in, they did not find the body. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. <sup>6</sup> Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” <sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.*

It’s been two years. Ramona is still in a panic over the pandemic. It is good to be cautious and careful, of course. It is appropriate to follow protocols, but recently, Ramona has felt enclosed in a ‘tomb’ of fear. She still can’t venture into the new normal. **She’s stuck. In a place of death.**

Adam is a young man, but he feels trapped in grief. Back when he was a teenager, his friend was tragically killed in a senseless car accident. It feels like yesterday. They had done everything together, went everywhere together, except that night. Guilt plagues Adam, and the good memories don’t bring him comfort. **He’s stuck. In a place of death.**

First Congregational Church doesn’t come across to those that visit as having any energy or purpose. In the estimation of its members, their past was better than the present, and no future could ever compare to those ‘good ole days.’ Truth be told, this community of faith is depressed. **It’s stuck. In a place of death.**

The leaders of nations today never get a respite from crisis, and the enduring global problems don’t get addressed. It feels to me as if they and their citizens are in bondage to social patterns that are killing them little by little. Violence, racism, and greed are old habits that die hard. **We are stuck. In a place of death.**

Nina Simone sings for all of us: “I wish I knew how it would feel to be free...I wish I could live like I’m longing to live!”

On that early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, James’ mother, and the other women were standing in the tomb, suspended between the past and the

present. They had expected to find Jesus' body there, among the dead. Perplexed, they were unable to move, much less to move forward!

**It's then, when they were stuck in this place of death, that God sent angels to ask them a question:** "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. Remember? Jesus told you that he would be handed over to sinners, crucified, and on the third day rise again."

**It's then, when like the women, *you and I* are trapped in Friday that God sends a Sunday angel or two. Just what we need!**

An angel is simply a messenger from God. This is the root meaning of the word. In the book of Hebrews it says that many of us have entertained angels unaware of it (13:2). This happens all the time, because God sends them to remind us of who we are and whose we are – to beckon us into life anew.

This angel may be a different, unbidden thought that invades your personal quiet time, and asks you: "Why are you here? In this state of indecision and death? **Look among the living; that's where you'll find Jesus.**"

An angel might show up in the guise of a friend, a child, or a pastor who observes: "You haven't been yourself for a long time; I haven't seen you smile in ages." Or "Are you still carrying your rock? Venture into the fullness of living in community." In other words: **"Look among the living."**

The angel that appears to the nations may be a heralding event that shakes us up and out of our rut with a warning question: "Why do you keep trying to resolve differences by war?" Or "You're just staying on the surface, when racial justice requires more from you!" Or "Wake up! You've got to give up greed for the well being of your environmental home. Will you?" Or "Do you think that God is going to change things without *you* changing? **Look among the living and find the way of transformation.**"

When Mary, Joanna, Mary, and the others heard those Easter angels, they followed their advice; they went among the living; *they* flew like angels to tell the eleven and the rest of Christ's followers! And *these* angels passed along to all of *us* the life-giving story of resurrection!

**"Look among the living and become alive in Christ!"**