

1

I wonder if you've ever had this experience.

You're working on a project at home, and you need a specific item to complete the task. Maybe you're repairing a broken chair and you need the wood glue. Or you need some duct tape or super glue or needle and thread for another repair. You know you have it somewhere in the house, so you begin searching for it. You check the closets. The cabinets. The basement. The garage. Under the bed. Closets in another room. Finally you give up, and someone who noticed your frantic search asks, "What ya looking for?"

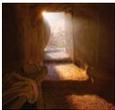
After a brief hesitation, you reply, "I've been searching so long, I forgot!"

At times, our lives reflect that frantic search, for sometimes we seem to be looking for something or someone, unsure of the exact nature of our search. Maybe we search for security by accumulating more wealth. Or maybe one searches for power by believing we're always right. Maybe you have searched for eternity by professing certain doctrines or beliefs. Along the way, you may stop and wonder, "Just what am I lookin' for?" Someone may see your

search and ask, "Who ya lookin' for?" With this question, the focus shifts from a search for *what* to a search for *who*. Suddenly we realize that it's not security, power, or eternity for which we search, but for a Oneness with God, a connection to the One who has created us.

After Jesus died on a cross, those early disciples began a search, but it appears they were not sure about the focus of the search either. They were searching for a dead body, a corpse lying in a tomb. When they arrived, they noticed the entrance to the tomb was open, the stone that sealed it had been moved. Just imagine the shock at such a discovery. It would feel as surprising as if you went to the cemetery this afternoon and found a gravestone toppled, the dirt moved away, and an empty casket in the hole in the ground. I imagine you would feel a mixture of outrage and confusion, wondering who and why anyone would do such a thing.

Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive to the tomb where Jesus was buried, and she ran to tell Peter and another disciple. "They've taken Jesus from the tomb, and we don't know where they have taken



2

him!” When the two disciples arrived, they found the burial clothes but no body. Those two followers of Jesus went back home, but Mary remained behind, standing at the tomb, crying. When she looked inside, she saw two messengers from God, often referred to as angels. They asked, “Why are you crying?”

Mary seemed to have forgotten who she was looking for, for she replied, “I’m looking for Jesus, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” She was looking for a dead body, not the One who offered hope times in chaos.

When she turned around, she saw Jesus but she did not recognize him, and he asked, “Why are you crying? Who ya lookin’ for?”

Thinking this person standing before her was the gardener, she replied, “If you’ve taken him away, tell me where you have taken him, and I will get him.” Even when encountering the risen Christ, Mary seemed to be looking for someone dead. Who ya lookin’ for?

Jesus had tried to give his followers a heads up about this event before it happened, for earlier in

John’s Gospel, Jesus said, “Soon you won’t see me... I assure you that you will cry and lament, and the world will be happy. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”<sup>1</sup>

If Mary had found what she was searching for—a dead body—her sorrow would not have turned to joy, for Jesus would have remained dead, and we would not be gathering here to celebrate Easter.

Suddenly, Jesus refocused Mary’s search by calling her name: “Mary!” Earlier in John’s Gospel, Jesus told his followers a story about a shepherd, “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice.”<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus called Mary’s name, she suddenly recognized him, turned around, and called out, “Teacher.” All those stories Jesus had taught about death and new life suddenly became clear, for she was standing in the presence of the One who brought life from death.

We’re often surprised when we encounter life coming from something that appears dead. When I

3

plant flower bulbs in the ground that look dead in the fall, I'm surprised when they sprout forth from the ground in the spring. Even when looking at an egg we may be surprised—more than just at the increasing price for them, but because something that looks lifeless can bring forth new life.

Eggs are often used at Easter as a reminder of new life, and as something for children to color and search for after hidden. Friday I volunteered to help children dye eggs at the Wellfield Botanical Garden using natural dyes, such as turmeric, red beets, and blueberries. As I watched the children create red eggs, I recalled a story that Episcopal priest Heidi Haverkamp told about

the legend of Mary Magdalene and her red egg, well-known in the Orthodox Church and the story most often told to explain the tradition for dying red eggs at Easter.

In this legend, Mary Magdalene decided to seek an audience before the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Caesar. Anyone who appeared before Caesar was expected to bring a gift, so Mary

Magdalene brought a plain, ordinary egg. She came before the imperial throne holding out the egg in her hand and greeting Tiberias, declaring: "Christ is Risen!" She told him about her teacher and savior, Jesus, and the unfair treatment and death penalty he'd received from Caesar's own governor, Pontius Pilate. She also told him how Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared, alive, to her and all his disciples.

Caesar responded with bored disbelief: "How can anyone rise from the dead? That's as impossible as that egg in your hand turning red." And, miraculously, the egg in her hand turned from white to a deep red. In Orthodox iconography, Mary Magdalene is often pictured holding up this red egg in her hand, sometimes with the words, "Christ is Risen," spelled out on it in tiny letters.<sup>3</sup>

As you watch children searching for eggs, or as you search for something around your house, ask yourself, "Who am I searching for?" In your search, may you remember that God has already found you through the risen Christ and offers you hope through Easter joy. Christ has risen. Alleluia!

<sup>1</sup> John 16:19-20, CEB.

<sup>2</sup> John 10:3-4, CEB.

<sup>3</sup> [www.gathermagazine.org/symbols-of-the-resurrection/](http://www.gathermagazine.org/symbols-of-the-resurrection/)

