

Do you remember the last time you felt overwhelmed? One of the times I remember feeling overwhelmed was when we lived in Eau Claire. I was overwhelmed with life and work. I felt like I had run out of steam. I felt like I didn't know what to do or where to turn. Have you ever felt that way?

During that busy, overwhelming time, I had neglected one of my chores around the house, washing clothes. I knew it was time to get working on it when each of the family members started to complain about not having clothes. I knew it was really getting bad when Isaac, my adopted son from Russia who couldn't speak English well at the time, indicated he needed clothes.

So on washing day, everyone brought their laundry to the family room in the basement and dumped their clothes in the middle of the room. When I first saw the pile, it seemed huge to me. I became disheartened. The pile of clothes had to be three feet tall with different colors sticking out everywhere. I looked at that pile and that was so overwhelming, I just walked away.

I came through a while later and I swear that pile of clothes had grown to 5 feet tall. I walked over to start sorting, and I again became so overwhelmed, I walked away.

By the time I came through a third time, that pile seemed to be taller than me. I wondered if the clothes in there were breeding somehow. Just looking at the clothes made me feel tired. Just looking at that pile of wrinkled clothes made me feel out of steam. All I wanted to do was quit and I hadn't even started. Have you ever felt that way? Life seemed so overwhelming I didn't know what to do? Have you ever felt that way?

Many of us in this room have experienced times that are incredibly overwhelming. We have faced times when we didn't know what to do or where to turn. There have been times when the world just groans, and we groan because of the burdens we carry. Have you been there?

In our scripture for today, we meet some women whose lives are groaning with hurt and pain from carrying the burden of grief. We know the story Jesus has died on the cross. His body has been thrown into a tomb and

sealed up. The story seems done. The hopes that had been wrapped up in Jesus were gone for those early disciples. And this scripture starts out with the only people who hadn't abandoned him, the women, coming to take care of Jesus and give him a proper burial.

*This Easter story from Mark is written for any of us who have ever felt overwhelmed with life and with questions about life. It is written for any of us who are carrying burdens that feel too great to carry on our own. The first message of this scripture is that God is willing to touch us in the place we most need God's touch.*

What is it that you find yourself burdened by? What do you need to bring to God?

The women were overwhelmed with grief, wondering who would remove the stone from the front of the grave. When they got there, the stone was removed. Their curiosity got the best of them and they went inside the tomb to see what was going on.

When they got inside they saw a young man, dressed in dazzling white clothes, who spoke to them about their fear and their grief, "Don't be afraid, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, he is not here. Look where he was laid."

These women were there to do one task, to finish a job they really didn't want to do, prepare Jesus' body for burial. Their hearts had been breaking, because the person they loved, the person they followed had died a tragic death. In that place of great pain, God came to these women and touched them through the voice of the surprising young man in the tomb.

This story reminds me that God is willing to come to us in the places we most need God's touch. What is it that you need to offer to God on this day that is tough and overwhelming for you?

Not only does God want to touch us, but God wants to send us out as well. The young man said, "Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee and you will see him just as he said." God sends the women out into the world with a message that death and the grave don't have

a final say over faithfulness and love of God. But that life and hope have the final message.

For the women, who came to finalize the death, they were given a message to share about life. For those disciples who had all fled in fear for their life, the messenger comes to ground them back in the faith. The messenger sends them back to Galilee, the place they first came to know the love of Jesus, the place where they were first be reminded of how to be and stay faithful, even in the midst of tough overwhelming times.

What about you? Have you ever experienced God's love and grace in your life? Have the challenges of living overwhelmed you, so that you have let your faith slide? If so, what do you want to do about it? What are you willing to do about it? Are you willing to let God touch you and send you?

There is a delightful story that I want to share with you. Helen Montone and her husband adopted a son. They always wanted their son to know that he had been adopted. So from the time he was very young, they explained it to him in a way he could understand.

Helen would say, "I was told that I could not have a baby in my belly and Jesus knew this. Jesus also knew that there was a lady who had a baby in her belly that she could not be a mommy to. From heaven, Jesus saw this baby on the day he was born, And Jesus decided that the baby (that was you) belonged with us. That's how we became a family."

One day on their way home from nursery school, their son asked her if he was born in Jesus' belly. Helen explained that he was not and once again she explained about how they became a family. After driving a while in silence, he said, "Oh no, Now I remember. I wasn't born in Jesus' belly. I was born in his eyes!"

I love that story. It reminds me that Jesus wants to give birth to each one of us. Jesus wants to make each one of us whole.

So long ago, when I was discouraged and overwhelmed by the laundry in the family room, I was finally able to get started on that, because my daughter Amanda, saw how big the pile had become and she started sorting the laundry. I didn't ask her to do it. She just did. And that encouraged me

to get started on it too. Especially when I saw that I didn't have to do it alone.

Sometimes, when life overwhelms us and we feel all alone, that is when we need to turn to God. We can remember this Easter and trust that God actually wants to touch us in the places we need it most. May God help us when we get overwhelmed, to turn to God and let God touch us where we need it the most. May God help us live lives that are faithful.

Amen