



Emilie Gossiaux, has been called the Helen Keller of the art world. In 2007, she was accepted into Manhattan's Cooper Union School of Art, where she hoped to further her dream of becoming an artist. But on October 8, 2010, Emilie was struck by a semi-truck as she bicycled to an art studio where she had an internship. Emilie, then 21, suffered traumatic brain injury, a stroke, and fractures to her head, pelvis, and leg. The accident also left her blinded.

On her second day in the hospital, a nurse told Emilie's parents that she would not recover and asked if they wanted to donate her organs. Later that night, Emilie began to move her arm. They decided not to donate her organs. Then the doctors said that Emilie wasn't a candidate for rehab. They told her parents they should find a nursing home for her. Her boyfriend would not accept the prognosis and began researching communication methods until he found the print-on-palm technique, which is similar to the way in which Annie Sullivan communicated with Helen Keller. He drew the letters *I l-o-v-e y-o-u* with his finger on Emilie's palm, and she responded immediately. She persevered through a difficult rehabilitation and in the spring of 2013, Emilie returned to Cooper Union to finish her undergraduate degree. Even more impressive, she won an Award of Excellence from the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts a few months later. It was for her sculpture *Bird Sitting*, which she created *two years after the accident that blinded her*. Her sculpture was included in an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution in 2013.

(<http://listverse.com/2014/12/23/10-inspiring-stories-of-people-who-turned-tragedy-into-triumph/>)

I would like to think that, under similar circumstances, I would have the kind of drive and determination that Emilie demonstrated, but I'm not so sure. But we love those kinds of stories, don't we? We love to hear the stories where people move from tragedy to triumph. It's almost as though it is printed onto our DNA to be moved by stories where someone conquers insurmountable odds.

This morning, on Easter Sunday, we celebrate the greatest story of triumph over tragedy – the resurrection of Jesus. Our text is the resurrection story from Mark 16:1-14 –

- 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.*
- 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb*
- 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*
- 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.*
- 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and*

*they were alarmed.*

*6 “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.*

*7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*

*8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

*9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.*

*10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping.*

*11 When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.*

*12 Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country.*

*13 These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.*

*14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.*

### *1. With God, It’s Never Over.*

Mark begins the resurrection story by telling us that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. There was absolutely no expectation of a resurrection. They fully expected to find the dead, lifeless body of Jesus.

Listen again to verse 1 – *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. When the Sabbath was over.*

Think about that word *over* for a moment. If ever there was a word that was descriptive of the attitude and state of mind of the disciples at that moment in time, it was the word *over*. All the hopes they had for the ministry of Jesus – over. All the excitement about his miracles – over. The large crowds hanging on his every word as he taught – over. The crucifixion had brought all of that and more to an abrupt and terrible end.

As you read through the resurrection story, the sense of resignation and defeat is palpable. *It’s over. Just as Jesus said “it is finished,” it seems finished.* You can almost sense the slow-moving foot dragging as they walk to the tomb. We know that feeling, don’t we? There is a stretching out of the final act because we don’t want our time with that person to come completely to an end. We want to hold on a little bit longer, so we take our time, not hurrying, putting off those final moments that tell us it really is finally, completely, the end.

Well, guess what. They got more time, didn’t they! It wasn’t over, no matter how much it seemed as though things really were over!

Think back over the months, since last Easter. A lot has happened, hasn’t it? How many good things have happened? Quite a few, I hope. How many tough things have happened? Probably quite a few of those as well. How many times did you think it was over? How many times did it seem as though things were so tough that there didn’t seem any way forward? When you suffered the loss of someone near and dear to you, and you thought that was the end.

Remember this, always – it might seem like the end, but it’s never the end, not with God. Who has the final word? God does! It might seem there is no hope, but there is always hope with God. It might seem there is no way forward, but there is always a way forward with God.

Who has the final say? God does! Do you think you face an insurmountable problem and there seems no way around it? God has a way! Does it seem like the end when we have lost someone we love? It’s not the end! What do we celebrate today? The resurrection! And does the resurrection apply only to Jesus? No – it is a promise for us all!

## 2. *When God Has A Plan, God Makes A Way.*

Listen to verses three and four – **3** *and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”* **4** *But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.*

Now, I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to worry. I know that probably comes as a shock to some of you, but it's true. But I suspect some of you are that way as well. I worry about whether or not I have enough things to worry about. And I suspect some of you are that way as well. I worry so much about so many things that I'm thinking about starting a series of conferences about how to worry more effectively. Maybe I'll write a few books, start a web site, and do a series of YouTube videos training people how to be better at worrying. I think there's a lot of opportunity there, don't you? But remember – I have already copyrighted this idea, so don't make me worry about anyone attempting to steal it away from me!

On the way to the tomb they asked one another who was going to roll away the stone? Now, right there is where I would count myself out. Sounds to me like a good reason not to go. Who wants to wander into a tomb? Not me.

But they are worried about how they will get access to the body of Jesus because they want to complete the task of preparing it for burial. It was, to them, the final, loving act they could perform for someone they loved so much. And they worried they couldn't do it, and if they could not do what they were going to the tomb to do, that was a really big deal. It really was something to worry about. There were all kinds of social and religious considerations at work, and we can have a good deal of sympathy for them. In fact, it makes me worry just reading about it, and I know how the story turns out!

We worry so much and about so many things! Why do we fret and worry so? If the resurrection proves anything, it certainly proves that if God has a plan, God will make a way. This is demonstrated time and time again throughout the Scriptures. Think about Abraham and the plan God had for him. But to Abraham, there were many times he not only failed to see God's plan, he failed to believe God had a plan, because he continually took matters into his own hands. And we can have some sympathy for Abraham as well, because we can't always see God's plan, can we? But remember this – God's plan is not incumbent upon our either seeing or understanding that plan. Abraham could not always see God's plan, but God had a plan nonetheless. And we could scan the pages of the Bible and find this to be true time and time again.

## 3. *The tragedy of the past can be overcome by the triumph of the present and the promise of the future.*

Two of the characters who are mentioned by name in this passage are Mary Magdalene and Peter. In verse 9 Mark adds this interesting bit of commentary about Mary Magdalene – *Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.* That's Mark's way of saying, *this is a person who had some issues.* Now, I should hasten to add that Mary Magdalene has been greatly maligned over the course of history. She is often portrayed as having been a prostitute, but did you know there is not one bit of evidence to give credence to that claim? Not one bit of Biblical or historical evidence exists to support that claim. I believe it entered into history as a way to justify the subjugation of women, which, unfortunately, continues in parts of the church and in larger society as a whole until this day. It's also a sad commentary on the way we just cannot seem to resist labeling, judging, and stereotyping people.

And Peter; well, we all know about Peter and his denials. But he did better, although he continued to have his struggles. Paul, for instance, had to call him out publically on at least one occasion because of Peter's reluctance in accepting outsiders into the church (Galatians 2:11-12 – **11** *When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.* **12** *For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group).*

I don't want to be critical, because I don't want anyone looking too closely at my life; there you will

find a lot to criticize; there are a lot of faults. The truth is, we all have a past. We all have failures. And we're all complicit in the problems of the day. I'm often amused by those who think that, because they aren't a part of the things they oppose that they are somehow exempt from the ills and the evils of the world. We're all complicit. And I don't say that to make you feel bad, but as a reminder that we all stand in need of God's grace. Every one of us.

You know what's great about God? The way he doesn't hold our past against us. Isn't that good news? It's not just good news; it's great news! That is the good news not just of Easter but the good news for every day! Every day!

For years, I have spent a lot of time in hospitals. I am grateful for what modern medicine is able to do very us; very grateful. And I am grateful to see the healing that takes place in hospitals. We are so fortunate because of the care that is available to us. I've seen a lot of people go into hospitals, and quite a few of them come home, but not all of them. Medicine can take us so far, but only so far. Medicine can heal us for a time, but not forever. The good news this Easter is that there is resurrection. Christ has been risen from the dead and one day, so shall we!