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Love with Eyes Wide Open

Mariama Charlie, who works as a field agent for our partner Christian Extension Services (CES), told me about Kumba, an 11-year-old girl who had been awarded a scholarship to attend primary school through a CES program. “When I went to tell Kumba, I couldn’t find her in the village” said Mariama. The father had decided that since he could not afford the school fees for her, he would marry her off to an older man in another village, in order to pay a debt.” Mariama looked for Kumba and finally found her hiding at the home of another relative. Kumba was overjoyed with the news. She told Mariama she had run away because she was terrified at the thought of being married off, but knew she had no future. Now she could go back home, put on a school uniform, attend school, and become a person of worth in her family and community. For her, it was like being freed from prison.

March 25 is the day that the church commemorates the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary. In that moment, Mary understood God’s radical love, and that through his love God had transformed her future and that of the entire world.

One of the first things Gabriel said to Mary was “Do not be afraid” (Luke 1:30). When the women went to the tomb on Easter morning, they were greeted by Jesus with the same words (see Matt. 28:10). Reading the final passage in

Matthew 27, we learn how frightened the Romans and chief priests were. They were more concerned about what would happen

after Jesus’ death than his disciples were. They knew the content of Jesus’ message—“after three days he would be raised up.” They not only knew the substance of his prediction, they understood the significance of it: if Jesus overcame death, the disciples would never have reason to fear again (see Matt. 27:62-65). So guards were put in place and a heavy stone sealed the tomb to thwart the predicted resurrection. When even that failed, they tried to prevent belief with a disinformation campaign.

Fear is still in the air, perhaps because as Easter people we nevertheless seem to live in a Good Friday world. Perhaps that Good Friday world persists because we have ignored Jesus’ greatest mandate—“Love one another as I have loved you.” What a challenging commandment this is! But what a different world we would have if we Christians were to live this command! I do not believe that Jesus was telling only the disciples to love each



other; he was telling me to love my neighbors as he loves them. When I am able to do this, it changes my perspective. I find it easy to love the Kumbas of this world. But what about her father, who was willing to sell his own daughter? What about the man who was going to buy her? Frederick Buechner says, “Christ’s love sees us with terrible clarity and sees us whole.” We like to say that love is blind, but Christ’s love is love with eyes wide open.

- “I am with you always...”
- “Perfect love casts out fear.”

The resurrection is God’s love story. Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

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