

EASTER SUNDAY 2020

"Christ is Risen, Alleluia". "He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia, Alleluia"

John 20: 1-18 - A Reflection for Easter Day

Mary Magdalene wanted to be a witness. She wanted people to know what Jesus had done for her. She wanted people to know how her life had been transformed, through her healing, through her discipleship.

But now, in our gospel account, she finds she is a witness to something else entirely. She arrived at the place, her heart pounding with exertion or with anxiety, prepared to sit a while by the enormous stone that sealed the entrance, and could only be moved by the strength of several men.

Her Lord, her Rabbi had been dead for three days. The stone sealed him in the grave. She came in the dark, before dawn, to sit by the stone that confirmed the finality of it; the terrible, unspeakable loss. But she found that it had been removed. As she found it, not as she had expected, she ran from the place. She ran to the houses where Jesus' friends lay sleepless, and she pounded on the doors.

The others ran to the tomb to see for themselves. No Jesus! No body! Just linen wrappings. It was incomprehensible but the beginning of a hint, somewhere at the edges of their consciousness, that something had happened. Something they could not name, perhaps something to fear, perhaps something to bring hope.

Mary arrived back at the tomb for the second time. The dawn began to edge its way into the sky. With the dawn came her tears, and she wept.

Looking again, turning her back to the tomb, she found the gardener standing just in front of her. And in just a moment, in the length of a heartbeat, she hears the sound of her own name being called... "Mary". She knew his voice, the voice of her Lord.

This is how resurrection happens. It begins in the darkness, when we aren't sure of the path before us, when we are waiting for the dawning of a new day, a new direction, a new hope. It is in that darkness that resurrection occurs. When we have relied on our own power, wisdom and sense of self-worth and we are challenged to look at ourselves and the world afresh. It is in that place of unknowing, when we understand at last: we cannot do it all by ourselves. We need God. We need a saviour, a fresh vision to show us the way.

It can be so easy in our discipleship, to believe that we know the way that God will take us. It can be so easy to believe that some doors are closed to us. Or perhaps there are doors that we do not want to open, stones that we do not want rolled away. So one of the questions for us to ask ourselves this Easter is - what is the awakening that we have not been ready to embrace until now?

Resurrection came to Mary, who had followed as faithfully as she was able. And so it comes to us; those of us who do follow faithfully, those of us who believe we are saved but long to be awakened to a fresh understanding of being disciples in the world today.

We follow along on this Christian journey. We try to stay close to God and to Jesus. And on that journey, we try to work out how we are to witness to others, the good news of Jesus in this time and this place.

Mary Magdalene wanted to be a witness. She wanted people to know what Jesus had done for her, how her life had been transformed through her knowing Jesus and trusting him to guide her all the days of her life.

Now she was also a witness to something else entirely. The unexpected. The unimaginable. We today are witnesses to the unexpected and the unimaginable.

Mary could not explain the empty tomb, but it caused her faith to rise up and grow. She experienced the risen Lord in a new way and went on to share this good news in the darkness of her time and place.

Resurrection comes to us as we take another look at what is before us. When we, like Mary, look again and are open to God making another way for us to proclaim our faith anew.

When we take another look, at what is before us - resurrection comes!

When Jesus calls us or calls our name, he gives us energy for the task at hand. He sends us out to tell others the good news, that there is life after death, loss and betrayal. This is a new, full, abundant life - not just in some far-off heaven, but right here and right now, even in these difficult times.

Today, Jesus gathers us afresh into community; the community of the faithful, the loving, the questioning, the stumbling, the givers, the receivers; the men, women and children of all ages.

When we look again at what is before us today, and we consider what we are facing together, it is still Jesus who gathers all of us into this resurrection community – whether by phone, post, email, or in Zoom room on this Easter Day.

The separation is real but the community spirit is alive and is rising today!

Today, our whole community is reaching across a table; holding onto one another, looking out for one another, standing at the gates and pathways of our homes and delivering hope. Today, our whole community is listening to God and to one another, in an unexpected and unprecedented way. Sharing the brokenness of life together and bringing the fragmented pieces of our lives into each new dawn.

Resurrection will still come on this Easter Day. Resurrection will come as we follow the call of God - in this place, in his way, for this time. Our God, our living hope, who called Mary, and who now calls us, wants us to look again and hear his voice, in the breaking of every new day.

Alleluia! Amen