

Sunday 20th April 2025

Easter Sunday

Gospel Reading

John 20.1-18

The Resurrection of Jesus

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.’ ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’ ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’ ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Other Readings: Acts 10.34-43 or Isaiah 65.17-25

Psalms 118.1-2,14-24

1 Corinthians 15.19-26 or Acts 10.34-43

Homily

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” (John 20.15)

These words, the first words of the resurrected Jesus, spoken in love not in accusation, should shape our lives. Jesus knows for whom Mary is looking. What he seeks is the acknowledgment of her quest. And what he seeks from us, who follow in her footsteps all these generations later, is a similar humility, wonder and hope. We should not come to worship today seeking vindication in our faith. Rather, we should come in the expectancy that our brokenness, failure, sheer human messiness, will be met with the Lord's compassion. And we should know, from the fact that he wanted to wash our feet on Maundy Thursday, that he will meet us with understanding, if we have the courage and humility to come to him: "For whom are you looking?" And we should have the confidence to really: "We are looking for you, Lord."

It is only Mary, on Easter morning, who has the courage, the humility, the openness and the strength to take her time, and actually to meet the Risen Christ. The two disciples who got to the tomb first, leave before he greets them. And so it is only Mary who is told the full good news first, which is actually not about Jesus' new life, nor even his presence with them, but the fact that he is "ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Jesus' resurrection, then, is proof of his identity, and therefore also proof of our identity, because his Father is our Father -we are children of God. And it is this extraordinary news that is sealed by the gift of resurrection. It is our relationship with God that is primary. New life itself is secondary. Unexpected, unearned, almost unbelievable new life is not the point of the resurrection. Rather, the resurrection is the proof that despite everything, recognising our tears, God's love extends to us all, without condition. Our task is to receive it - which requires our response - but that love itself is absolutely without limit.

This theme continues on the evening of Easter Day, when Jesus appears to the twelve, and when we are told that Thomas isn't present. Thomas' struggle to believe, which we are told that he won't do unless he can put his hand into Jesus' side, isn't intended to demonstrate his substandard faith, rather it is a demonstration of God's understanding of the human condition, which is often marked by doubt and pain. And Jesus is also wounded, during the Passion, including the very specific wound in John's account that is made by the spear in his side. And he is wounded because all human beings are wounded in life - and by life. It is his woundedness that Jesus offers to Thomas, and it is to Jesus' woundedness that Thomas instinctively responds. If Jesus hadn't born the marks of the nails and the spear, Thomas would not have been able to recognise him for who he really is.

There is a lot going on here. The gift of resurrection, and its message, is not about something automatic that happens because of us, as it were - because of our faith or our hope or our love - rather, resurrection is a gift that leads to our faith, and inspires our hope, and deepens our love. “Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” Jesus asks, and he asks it knowing the human condition, and being himself the embodiment of God’s free gift of new life. We can’t be set free from the realities of life in this world, but we can be given the gift that will help us to live here with grace and joy and freedom. And this resurrection gift, to be lived now, is the message of Easter.

It’s a message that we carry from our worship today into the streets and our homes, our schools and our work places.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Conversation Questions

1. When you came to worship this morning, what were you hoping to receive as God’s Easter gift to you?
2. If resurrection is the gift that enables us to live with the sometimes very difficult realities of life in the world, how will you seek to share your understanding of that gift with other people?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.*

(or)

*God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;*

*for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

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