

Easter Day—Year B
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
I Corinthians 15:1-11
John 20:1-18

Oh, it's been a long week. So many emotions. Joy, hope, power, that sense of being a part of something really big. Tension. Fierce exchanges. Shared meals that are more than just a meal. Rituals that expose our fear of intimacy, a fear that runs that deep. The night. Oh, the night that ran so dark and deep. Drama, more drama. Lies, deceit, false witness, the sham trial, THE question—"What is truth?" The sound of the hammer against the nail. Pain, more pain, the pain of goodbyes said too soon. Too much pain to watch, too much pain to feel, too much pain to hold. Sorrow, despair, powerlessness, sheer and utter powerlessness. Surrender. Silence. Deafening silence. The intimate rituals of death—myrrh, aloes—a hundred pounds' weight—linen cloths, new tombs. Sabbath. Stillness. Nothing moves, not even the air. Waiting, waiting, waiting.

Yeah, it's been a long, hard week.

Their beloved Teacher, Lord, Master, Friend executed at the hands of the state with a good bit of help from the religious establishment. It was a crushing loss. Their world turned upside down. *They were in shock. Some gathered together, not saying much, mostly just keeping company together* as you do when loss takes your breath away and a 10,000 pound weight rests upon your heart. *Some went into hiding, locking doors—physical and emotional—just to feel safe.* And some, some were counting the minutes, like a runner on the starting blocks, just waiting for the first day of the week to signal that they could move.

And move they did.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb, and she saw that the stone had been removed. 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." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first—*oh, the human drive to compete—don't you just love it?*

The other disciple bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and Peter went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. *Huh? Really? They returned to their homes? The other disciple—the one whom Jesus loved—may have seen and believed, but he sure didn't get it—seeing and believing didn't take*

him dancing down the path into new life; he just **went back to the place from whence he had come.**

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

It's so interesting. In Mark's gospel, **the women discover the tomb is empty, and they are overcome with terror and dread and flee from the tomb saying nothing to anyone because they are afraid.** Matthew and Luke tell the story slightly differently, but in both accounts, **the women encounter an angel who tells them not to be afraid because this empty tomb thing has filled them with fear and terror.**

But in John's gospel, there is *not an ounce of fear and dread.* Mary has *gone in too deep* for that. The only thing Mary feels is *sorrow down to her bones.* Bad enough to **lose her beloved Lord**, but **now, his body is gone, too?** There is *nothing, nothing, nothing from which she can orient herself. No place of remembrance. No touchstone. Nothing.* **As she wept and bent over and looked into that empty tomb,** a question greeted her—"Woman, why are you weeping?" **the angels ask. "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."** When she had said this, she turned around, and the question greeted her again, this time from a man she didn't recognize, **"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"**

Mary is focused like a laser; she is focused on the fact that her world has been turned upside down, and *everything* she thought she knew, *everything* she had figured out about her life and her life's path, *every orienting point is gone—that's what she's focused on.* She is **determined to find the dead body of her Lord so that she can find ground zero of her pain and grief, and maybe then, maybe then her world, while broken, will at least be coherent.** **"So frankly, Mr. Gardener, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."** Man, is she fierce.

Jesus said to her, **"Mary!"** She turned and said to him in Hebrew, **"Rabbouni!"** (which means Teacher).

What was it? Was it the sound of her name? The tenor of his voice? The heart that called to her heart? The love that she had been tracking over these three days when death divided them? The look in his eye? The deep calling to deep? What was it that quickened in her all that had grown dead?

I don't know, none of us do, **but I do know this, when Resurrection calls our name, it can happen that fast.** All the broken pieces of our world, all the aching in our heart, all of our lost hope and despair, all that swirls in confusion, all that has grown dead within us, **all of this means nothing when Resurrection calls our name.** And, though our *heads can't fathom it, and our minds can't process it,* **our hearts know that Love has called our name. He is alive, and so are we.**

It's going to take time to come to terms with **the Life that death can't hold. Mary calls him Teacher;** *she thinks her life has been restored to what it was before this last week turned it all*

upside down. *But there is no going back to what was before; Jesus says as much. 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.’” “Do not hold on to me...I am on a journey too, Mary, there is more to come; there is always more to come.”*

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.

She has no idea what Resurrection life will hold for her, or for the disciples, *or for any of us* whose hearts quicken when the Risen Christ calls our name, *but it won't be as it was before.* The world has been made new. Stones do get rolled away. Graveclothes do fall away, unfit for the life that *now* is ours. *The temptation is to try to resurrect what was before instead of following Resurrection into the life that now is ours.* We want to hold on to him as we knew him because *nothing is more disorienting than Life that is bigger than death.* He will call us forward, ascending ever higher, and ever deeper, into the heart of God.

Dare you risk it? Will you leave your graveclothes behind and trust that your tears of sorrow can turn to tears of joy? Can you trust that the stone really is rolled away, setting you free from the tomb that had sealed your deadened life away? Can you trust the voice that calls your name, who calls you with exquisite tenderness, calls you back to the deepest truth of your being—you are God's beloved, always. Can you trust that Love has come again, and Life really is yours forever?

No roadmap for this. No guarantees that the cross won't come again and again, but for every crucifixion we experience in this life, Resurrection will be waiting to greet us on the other side. And the only thing more daunting than our pain will be discovering the freedom and life that lie beyond it—the life that can't be contained, that can't be held, but only danced.

It's been a long Lenten journey, and *this last week has felt eternal*—so many emotions. The psalmist says, “Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning”—and so it has. It's time to let go of all that we've held onto, throw our arms wide open, and let our alleluia's rise. Amen.

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