

Reflection for Easter Day. John 20: 1-18

It has been a horrendous time, a time of terror and trauma beyond belief. Jesus' followers, His friends, His disciples, must have thought that this was the end. All they had hoped and prayed for was gone. Jesus had told them that was not the end but - but, how could they see any future, all they had now was grief and despair. Early in the morning, after the Sabbath, Mary Magdelene goes under the cover of darkness to the tomb. The least she could do, she thought, was to finish the anointing of Jesus' body, so hastily put into the tomb before the Sabbath. To Mary's horror the stone has been moved from the entrance to the tomb. Mary runs in panic to Simon Peter and the other disciple, not named but probably John. Mary says, "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where he is." Peter and John go in haste and find it as Mary has told them; no body and the linen wrappings lying in a heap. Peter and John return home, their grief compounded by the apparent disappearance of Jesus' body, but Mary remains, staying outside weeping. Mary sees, first of all, two angels and then she turns and sees Jesus. Jesus simply says, "Mary" and in this moment she realises that she is indeed face to face with Jesus. This must have been a tremendous moment, the beloved teacher who was nailed to a cross, His body placed in a tomb now stands before her, alive and talking to her, speaking her name. Jesus asks that she does not hold Him, but tells her to go to the disciples and to say to them that He is ascending to the Father, my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God. Luke tells us that she goes and announces to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" This rather low-key sentence can surely not give us the excitement and emotion that Mary must have felt, that the disciples must also have experienced. How soon do they begin to go over in their minds all those things that Jesus said, the things that he told them must happen? How quickly can they put aside their initial feelings of grief and despair and start the tasks that Jesus has left for them to do? In the midst of all this trauma they now have hope. Hope won for them by the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross - the cost but the benefit is new life!

As we look at the world around us, we see so much pain, so much war and killing, we see the hungry and the distressed. The temptation is to despair, but the Resurrection gives us hope, just as it did for the disciples on that first Easter morning. By His rising from the dead Jesus has destroyed the 'last enemy - death.' Jesus has won for us the promise of eternal life!

Alleluia Christ is risen. He is risen indeed Alleluia!
God of promise and purpose,
We thank you that your Son
Risked all for us in his life and death.
We rejoice with you at his rising in new life,
such as you promised for those
Who keep faith and true to you.
May the joy that we feel
Create a wave of peace and celebration
Which washes away doubt and fear
And brings hope and reconciliation
To a broken world
And a new beginning for humankind
Amen