

John 20:1-18

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. 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 towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He 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 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 in their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, 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. 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." When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 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, to my God and your God.'" 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.

"Resurrecting Faith"

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

John 20:16

Growing up, the only time my father went with me to church was for Easter sunrise service. Side by side, hand in hand, we trembled from the cold with other New Englanders on the church green, waiting for the sun to wake up. Sometimes she arose, sometimes she didn't. But it didn't matter to me. All I remember is hearing about Jesus being alive again, singing 'Up From the Grave He Arose' and 'Christ the Lord is Risen Today,' eating delicious hot cross buns at breakfast in the church basement fellowship hall, and hoping that coming to church would end my father's love affair with alcohol.



What I don't remember is anything that the preacher taught about Easter faith. I don't remember either Rev. Wolf or Rev. Julianni ever saying anything about the power of resurrection faith to free us from all fears or to unbind us from deadly addictions. I don't remember hearing them say anything about Jesus' self-giving, non-violent, sacrificial way of redemptive

Love. I don't remember them teaching that, when God raised Jesus from the dead, *God said 'yes' to Jesus and 'no' to the powers who killed him and that, if Jesus is Lord, the lords of this world are not* (adapted from Borg's and Crossan's, *The Last Week*). But what I do remember are the smiles that appeared when the preacher got to the part in the garden story when Jesus said 'Mary,' and Mary said 'Teacher.' Hearts seemed to be warmed by that old gospel tune: *Jesus Loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, I am weak, but He is strong. And, I do remember souls singing . . . He speaks and the sound of his voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing; and the melody that He gave to me within my heart is ringing.*

I suspect that my belief of being intimately known, named, and loved by Jesus kept me coming back to Christ's Church. Being devoted to Jesus, it was easy to let loose of my father's hand and set off each Sunday without him to hear again Jesus' invitation to walk and talk with him. I looked forward to meeting Jesus in the scriptures and learning about God and the kingdom of God from him. Tethered to Jesus I was personally grounded in and transformed by the resurrecting faith of Mary on Easter morning. In church: *I come to the garden alone, when the dew is still on the roses, and the voice I hear falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses, and the joy we shared as we tarried there none other has ever known*

None other has ever known . . . except of course, for all church people of resurrection faith who joyfully gather each Sunday to hear God's Word and to pray in Jesus' name.

None other has ever known . . . except of course, for communities of the resurrection experiencing the joy of working with Christ to bring God's peaceable kingdom of justice and love into earth.

None other has ever known . . . except of course, for Easter people who can face tomorrow with the faith that what matters is not how tightly we hold onto to Jesus . . . but how

tightly he holds onto us.

None other has ever known . . . except for those who God is calling home. In her book, 'Windows To Heaven,' Dr. Komp (who ministers to children with cancer) told a beautiful garden story of resurrection. She wrote:

Little children do not quickly lose the sense of where they came from nor do they fear where they are going. I sit by the beds of children and I have seen God's love made manifest in a descending way. Jesus comes again and again to them to bring peace and to link his story with theirs. Tom's cancer began when he was in high school. He fought his cancer in a positive way but by nineteen it had overcome him so that he was a quadriplegic and faced death. At one visit, Tom told me about a vision he had while he was meditating. In his meditation, Tom sat himself in a beautiful garden and saw a man there, seated on a bench. The man's fingers were like roses and he walked with Tom in the garden and talked to him. The man touched him and Tom reported that he moved in his bed for the first time in months. He did not want to leave the garden or the man's presence, but his companion went ahead and told him that he could not come with him yet. I asked Tom if he knew who the man was. He said, "I know it was Jesus." I could tell from his eyes that he was afraid that I would not believe him. So thinking of the images he described, I first thought that he must have formed the vision from the old gospel hymn, 'In the Garden.' He was confused by the question because he did not know the hymn and when I sang it to him he did not recognize the melody. But he was excited because he recognized in the words the parallel image to his vision. Two days later he told his parents that he would not live through the night and died peacefully in his sleep.

None other has ever known. . . except for Ann Weems who offers the poem prayer: 'And the Glory'

The silence breaks into morning, that One Star lights the world. The lily spring to life and not even Solomon . . . Let it begin with singing and never end! Oh, angels, quit your lamenting! Oh, pilgrims, upon your knees in tearful prayer, 'Rise up and take your hearts and run.' We who were no people are named anew God's people, for he who was no more is forevermore. Amen.

Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning to Galilee after the baptism that John announced how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

'If the resurrection were meant to be a historically verifiable occurrence,' wrote Richard Lischer, 'God wouldn't have performed it in the dark without eyewitnesses. 'Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?' the Negro spiritual asks. No, in fact, we were not. No one was. 'Resurrection was an event transacted between God the Creator and God the Son by the power of God the Holy Spirit. Not a single canonical Gospel tells us how it happened. We don't know if it was a typically warm Palestinian morning or unseasonably cool. We don't know if the earth shuddered when he arose or if it was preternaturally still. We don't know what he looked like when he was no longer dead, whether he burst the tomb in glory or came out like Lazarus, slowly unwrapping his shroud and squinting with wonder against the dawn. It really happened, but we will never prove it (or disprove it) historically' (Ch. Century, Mar13-20, 2002).

In her provocative study of the resurrection, 'Seeing the Lord,' Marianne Sawicki defines the church as the community of those who have the *competence* to recognize Jesus as the risen Lord. It specializes in discerning the Risen One. The Gospel of John presents a fair number of incompetent witnesses. . . But they have this in common; as long as they remain in dialogue with Jesus, their darkness will give way to dawn, and they will become 'competent' for witness. When Jesus calls his friend by name, 'Mary,' and she responds with the intimate 'Rabboni,' or 'My dear Rabbi,' Mary Magdalene is transformed from the last mourner of the dead Messiah into the first witness to the living Lord. As long as we remain in dialogue with Jesus, we too can become candidates for competence (Ibid,Lischer).