



***“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 toward 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 to 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 around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” 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 and your 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.”***

***John 20:1-18***

What I love about the resurrection story from John is that it features Mary Magdalene as the first evangelist. Mary is the one who runs to tell the disciples the Good News of seeing the risen Lord. Her mourning at the tomb turns into joy. Death did not have the last say.

This week we will have gone through acclaiming Jesus as king during Palm Sunday, seeing him gathered around meal and foot washing on Maundy Thursday, watching his death at the hands of the State during Good Friday, and rejoicing along with Mary Magdalene at his “quietly dramatic” appearance at the tomb.

Sunday we will proclaim “Jesus is alive!” And perhaps we are in just the position to accept this “quietly dramatic” appearance of God in the flesh, and the unlikely evangelist celebrating the miracle. Many of us are still cooped up in our homes, working, caring for children, or both. Students of all ages are trying to finish up classes; and some are without doubt trying to stay relatively sane or manage from day to day without stressing over numbers and vaccines. Many have been looking for a miracle, or at least some type of return to some semblance of “normal.”

And yet the reality is it may be a while until our world returns to our desired normal; or that “normal” may look a bit different as we continue to step into the future. Good Friday can seem as if it’s stretching out forever. Just as Mary wept at the tomb, we too weep with very real grief; grief that can’t be contained in trite phrases such as “it’s tough right now” or “I’m managing.”

And yet we proclaim this weekend the greatest news we could ever hope to celebrate as believers and followers of Christ. Jesus is alive! My friends, maybe our hope this Easter will not found in elaborate church services, huge family gatherings, Easter breakfasts, egg hunts or choruses sung by large choirs. Maybe our hope this Easter is found in the One who knows our name, saying our name; saying our name in such a way that we know instantly who God is and what we are called to proclaim. Saying our name in such a way that we can’t help but tell others that our worst fears have not been realized, and that we follow One who has conquered death.

May this Easter be an opportunity for you to celebrate the news and to feel the impact of his love in your life. May we all take the time to proclaim without hesitation: **“The Lord is risen, He has risen, indeed. Alleluia!”**

**Prayer:**

**Gracious God,**

**You loved this world so much, that you gave your one and only Son, that we might be called your children too. Lord, help us, every day, to live in the gladness and grace of the Easter news. May we have hearts of thankfulness, for your sacrifice; as well as eyes that look upon your grace and rejoice in the promise of our salvation. Lord, help us to walk in the light and hope of your love proclaiming your good news to the world. Amen**