

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

Mark 16:1-8

Easter Sunday, Sunday 12th April 2020

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid

Today we come to Easter Sunday, weeks into lockdown, not able to celebrate in the way we usually would. But as I pondered our reading for today the questions God whispered to my heart were "Which unexpected places will you find me in today?" and "How will you use this Easter celebration to seek my presence and find unexpected joy?"

Our passage focuses on the experience of three grieving women. They had watched from a distance as Jesus died on the cross. Their hearts breaking. Their hope extinguished. Mary and Mary saw Jesus being laid in the tomb. They desperately wanted to complete the funeral rites but the Sabbath had begun and their only option was to walk away and observe the Sabbath having watched Joseph of Arimathea roll a large stone to seal the tomb.

I wonder how they spent that Sabbath day? A day where what they could do would have been heavily restricted. There was so much they wanted to do. But all they could do was wait. Perhaps that is a feeling we now understand even better than before.

As soon as the Sabbath is over we read that they rushed to buy spices and left early in the morning to begin their task before the temperature rose. Jesus body had already been left for one day and so they were keen to anoint it as soon as they could. The restrictions of the Sabbath were lifted but as they walked they realised another practical issue that could stop them carrying out their task – how would they

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move the stone? We don't hear any more of their conversation but we do discover that the God who raised Jesus from the dead has already solved their problem.

When we face huge obstacles I wonder what our response is? Do we try to solve them ourselves? Do we give up? Or do we turn to the God who raised Jesus from the dead and ask him to intervene?

For the women, the joy of the moving of the stone is almost immediately replaced by fear. The body they expected to find is gone and in its place is a young man. He proclaims wonderful news to them: the Jesus who they are looking for has been raised from the dead! And not only that but he has gone on before them and they are urged to follow Him and to tell the disciples and Peter the amazing news of what God has done. It must have been overwhelming for the women – trying to process their grief but then being told that Jesus is alive! Expecting to find death but instead discovering resurrection life! But instead of finding joy, the women are crippled by fear. Fear of believing the words of the young man? Perhaps fear that sharing them would bring ridicule?

In contrast to the Shepherds who bowed before the baby Jesus and then ran along the road sharing the good news with anyone who would listen, these women are silenced by fear. I wonder how we feel about sharing the Good News of Easter with those around us today? Do we ever have a sense of fear? Fear of ridicule? Fear of truly believing that God can and will answer our prayers?

This Easter Sunday I believe God wants to surprise us with joy. He wants to meet each of us where we are, for us to find him in unexpected places – perhaps reminding us that he is right with us in our isolation – reaffirming that promise that he will never leave or forsake us. Perhaps he wants us to see that he is rolling away huge stones and inviting us to witness His divine action in our lives; calling us to be Easter beacons of hope to those around us; and reminding us that he has gone before us and is calling us on. Because Christ is risen...He is risen indeed! Hallelujah

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