

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

John 20:11-14 Wednesday 22nd April 2020

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

When I was out for a walk and reflecting on the passage I felt the Lord ask me to go with Mary into the garden. I was moved on Sunday when Sue spoke beautifully of the journey to the tomb, her account walking us right alongside Mary - the tears, the tension and the anticipation of seeing her Lord's cold and broken body. The passage above continues the account. As she arrives at the tomb what she anticipated is stripped away and she has to take in a new reality. A closed tomb is open and what's more there is no body and instead two angels. Her whole being must have been in turmoil.

With gentleness the angels ask "Woman, why are you crying?" When she sees Jesus he asks her the same. "Woman, why are you crying?" We hear her reply. "They have taken my Lord away."

Mary had been freed of seven demons. I don't know what her life was like trapped by these but the freedom and transformation she found as Jesus set her free was life changing. She dedicated her life to following him and serving him. She had built her new life on Jesus. Then she had watched him die. Not only was she grieving his death but also her loss, what would she do now? What would her life be like? Would the past way of living start to creep back?

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Today so much of our lives have been stripped away. The challenge to keep going with in the restrictions of lockdown prevents time to grieve the loss - loss of the freedom to see people, loss of work, finance, freedom to jump in the car and go away for the weekend, to meet up for a drink, a meal. I wonder what you grieve. I wonder how you would answer the question "Why are you crying?" We know that lockdown will end. Like Mary our lives will move on. I wonder what will be different in our post-lockdown lives. As we grieve, will we let go of some aspects of our lives and move forward into a new way of being.

In grief and confusion Mary's vision is blurred, and then a voice. "Woman" she doesn't recognise him. Then Jesus calls "Mary.". It could be that like me you are making and receiving more phone calls than normal. Some voices are very familiar and quickly we know who we are speaking to. Mary knows instantly, this is the voice of Jesus. I wonder why he calls woman first. Is Jesus gently preparing this hurting woman for the revelation of his resurrection. On hearing her name she responds "Rabboni!" - teacher! Not with a question mark but an exclamation!

Names have meaning and being called by name is significant. Jesus calls "Mary." It's a call to believe and know her risen Lord. To follow him in a new way with assured hope; to believe even in the midst of the confusion and grief. As we move forward in our lives let us spend time listening to the call Jesus has for us as individuals and also as a community. In this account Mary meets Jesus alone and he commissions her to go and tell his brothers "I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God".

Mary went to the tomb to offer her final act of worship, to anoint and prepare the body of her lord. On meeting the risen Jesus she is listened to, her pain and confusion is acknowledged. With deep love Jesus gives her time to prepare for the truth and then lets her hold him, to be intimately close to him before sending her out.

Let us listen to the voice of Jesus, listen to him call us by name. Let us wait on him and draw near so we can then go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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