

John 20:1-10 (NRSV)

**20** 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. <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Well this morning, this glorious Easter morning – we are presented with John’s resurrection account. When Christ’s followers, in this case Mary Magdalene, discover the truth about their teacher, their master, their

Lord...that he is the Son of God and that he has defeated death and by so doing freed us all.

This passage, is more than a mere depiction of events on that miraculous morning -- it teaches us so much – not only about the nature of Christ – but also about the nature of discipleship – the call that each and every one of us hears as followers of Christ – the invitation that we are given to Go and Speak – tell our brothers and sisters.

Let's look again at this scene.

We know that Mary has risen early to go and give the body of Jesus the honour and care due a loved one. She goes at the earliest possible moment – early Sunday morning immediately after sunrise. The Jewish Sabbath has now ended – up until this moment Mosaic law would have stopped Mary from doing what she wanted to.

But what happens when she arrives? Horrors – the body of Jesus is gone! She knows not where he has been taken – who has taken him? In anguish she runs to Peter and tells him. He and the BD run back to the tomb to confirm her report. Peter and the BD start out together, but the BD arrives

first. He waits until Peter enters first then he too goes in. We are told that they believe but they do not understand. And they go home.

Mary however stays and cries. Weeping out of her pain and her love.

Imagine her grief...she had witnessed her beloved teacher whipped, humiliated, nailed to a cross. She saw his death. Then she was frustrated in her attempt to give him the proper funeral – she had to wait until Sunday morning – the third day after his death. Now she is prepared to come to the tomb and do for him the only thing she can – to care for that broken body – to honour that cherished memory. She can't even do that... for the tomb is empty... the body gone

She is so focused on her purpose – so focused on what she wanted to do for him, that she has forgotten his teachings – she has forgotten the scriptures – she loves him, she may believe in him but she doesn't understand. All she understands at this point is her loss, her grief her pain.

It is in this state, through this veil of tears and grief, that she sees 'the gardener'. She sees her beloved Jesus but doesn't recognize him – she is still

so focused on her loss that she does not see in this figure before her the Christ – Risen just as scripture predicted – Triumphant just as he taught.

Do we not have a lot in common with Mary, with Peter and with the Beloved disciple? Are we not acutely aware of Christ's absence in our world? Do we not peer into darkened places and cry out – where is he? What have they done with him? Do we where to look?

Is it not fair to say that we too love, that we too believe, but that we too sometimes don't understand?

Those two disciples running to the tomb are very like us aren't they? As followers of Christ we ought to be united in our goals. But is not the history of our faith – from the first century down to the present - is it not a history of division. We have all run our own little foot races haven't we – trying to get to him first, competing with one another. Separated by our pride rather than united by his love?

And like those disciples – we too can come so close – believing but not understanding – catching a glimpse of the truth ...but then turning away. Back to our lives.

And of course there is a little Mary in each and every one of us. We love him, we wish to honour and serve him...but do we listen to him? Do we hear his voice ...or do we come focused on what we want to do for Him. Focused on our ideas of what he wants...on what we interpret as his will, his plan for us?

Are we capable of seeing him where we least expect to find him... in the face of a toothless, filthy man asking us for money? In the face of a young woman with multiple piercing, blackened hair, and numerous tattoos. Those of different skin colour, different ideas, different ways? In the struggles and need of those living on the other side of the world?

Do we see him ... or do we simply see a scruffy gardener. Do we turn away from him without understanding?

Mary didn't expect to see Him, she didn't expect to encounter Jesus – walking and talking – in that place of death – yet once he spoke her name – once she heard that wonderful voice ... a voice of compassion and love ...a voice that she had listened to, that had healed her – a voice that she loved.

That is the moment she understood.

That is the moment she truly recognized her teacher as

The Son of God who could not be bound by earthly trappings

The Son of God who could not be defeated by death

The Son of God who could not be held onto

But the Son of God who was risen, who knew her and knew her pain

The Son of God who is with us still

That is the beauty and the promise of this passage – that the Son of God is with us. And with his strength, his guidance and his love – we will see.

We, who are like the disciples, we must learn to run together in our faith.

Who must learn that though we travel different roads – we start and end at the same place.

But we are also like Mary, whether we are men or women,

We can turn our faces to Jesus and see him. **WE NEED TO DISCERN HIS WILL – LISTEN FOR HIS VOICE IN OUR LIVES.**

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For he speaks to each of us – he knows our cares and woes – he knows our triumphs and our joys...

HE KNOWS OUR NAME.

And when he calls it, we too can be obedient and true in our faith just like Mary. We too, can be unified in love for one another – through our love of Him.

We must be prepared to turn ourselves toward him. TO LISTEN – THEN TO GO ...TO SPEAK...AND TO TRANSFORM. TO SHAPE OUR LIVES AND OUR WOLRD – OUR FUTURE IN FAITH.