

April 17, 2022 – Resurrection of Our Lord

¹Early 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. ²So 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.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus 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.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus 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.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

While it was still dark.

That’s when Mary Magdalene came and found the tomb was empty.

Not at dawn’s first glistening light, with the sun coming up and gently warming her face. Not when birds were chirping and dew glistened on the lush green grass. With all

apologies to those who are tasked with composing artistic renderings of the scene and need to have the symbolism, the Gospel says something a little different.

It says the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus began to be revealed when it was still dark ... at the coldest point in the day ... when it was still dangerous and disquieting to go out into the world.

I am really grateful we have even the option of gathering together to celebrate Easter this year. Amen?

But some are not here today because, for all sorts of reasons, it is dangerous or disquieting to go out into the world. It's not what it was just a couple of months ago but we are still in a global pandemic. And I am grateful that we have the option of having those of you who are at home joining with us online.

But even if you are here, there are myriad ways in which the world is still cold, concerning and clouded in confusion.

A war begun by a callous dictator rages on half a world away but the images and scenes of its carnage make their way into our homes. It gets harder week after week to pay the prices of gas and groceries. Prayers for this morning's service were written Friday and at least two mass shootings in this country have been reported *since* then.

It is easy to wonder amid all the chaos, as Mary Magdalene did, as Peter did, as the other disciples did, where is God? What is God up to in all this?

And the Gospel of John points us back to the beginning. Our creeds proclaim our understanding that on the third day, that is the third day after his death on the cross, Jesus rose again. Alleluia! But the Gospel points out this is also the first day of the week. Something new is beginning. And John began his account of the Gospel by telling us "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jesus is the living Word, there at

creation and there at the Resurrection and here with us today as all things are made new.

The Gospel harkens back not just to its own beginning but to the beginning of the whole story. The first two verses of Genesis explain that “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was a formless void and *darkness* covered the face of the deep.”

God is not afraid of the dark.

God is present in the dark.

God is creating in the dark.

The Easter Bunny is often depicted today with an ample supply of carrots, which might help them to see and hide all those eggs before dawn ... but it is God who has perfect night vision.

God saw clearly a vision for creation, amid chaos so long ago in that primordial deep that we cannot fathom. God

saw clearly, a vision for creating anew when Jesus rose from the tomb ... when he was still in the darkness of Mary's womb, when the darkness shrouded his arrest at Gethsemane, when the skies went dark over his lifeless body on the cross and when the stone rolled over and sealed the darkness in his tomb.

God sees clearly what must be done in the darkness of our world today. While it is still dangerous and disquieting, God is still creating anew, making a way forward and bringing life from death and out of nothingness.

But we often can't see it ourselves. It is often obscured from our sight – from all of our senses. We look, we listen, we feel our way around our troubled world, and we cannot find God. We do not yet understand the scripture and we fear God is just inexplicably gone.

And we cry. We cry because it just seems to get worse before it gets better. From Mary Magdalene's perspective, her

friend and teacher Jesus had not only been executed but now she and her companions could no longer even give him a proper burial. There could not be any closure, any proper mourning.

We cry for those whom we have lost. We cry for situations that look impossible. We cry for pain that we endure. We cry because at some point, there's nothing else we can do.

But Jesus is alive. Alleluia!

Jesus is near. Alleluia!

Jesus is calling. Alleluia!

Jesus called Mary by her name and finally she could see her Lord for who he really was and is ... risen indeed. And surely, she was overjoyed, and if Jesus' response is any indication, she hugged him like she was never going to let him go ever again.

But alas, you must, he says to her. And furthermore, you need to tell about what you have seen.

Jesus knows you and me, each by our name. Even in the dark, there are moments, fleeting though they may be, of clarity in God speaking to us. It is natural to want to hold on to them and wish we could just remain in those moments. But alas, they do not last forever.

And we are tasked with telling the story. We are told by our Lord to tell what we have seen. Not to tell what we can't see. We can't speak to everything God is up to, everywhere God has shown up, everyone God is saving.

But we can tell what we have seen. What God has been up to in our lives and the lives of those whom we love around us. Everywhere God has shown up for us, whether we were expecting it or not. How God has saved us and how abundant our life is with God in it.

We cannot hold Jesus in one place and remain there forever, as nice as that may sound. But we can hold on to the joy that God's embrace brings and make it the core of our being.

Even while it is still dark.

The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not, does not and will not overcome it.

Amen.