

Some words for Easter, 2020

From the Gospel of John 20:1-18

How early it is! The sky is changing from deep darkness to the faded blue-gray of morning light. Now is her time to go to the tomb--in the dimness of early morning light, before the others awake--just to be there, near his tomb just one more time. And she runs to the place where he is buried, but the stone is rolled away. How can this be? This stone takes a number of strong workmen to put in place. It was guarded. But now no one is there and the stone is rolled away. She is frightened and runs back to tell Peter and the other disciples: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Peter and John run to the tomb. John reached the tomb first and looked in, and he did not see the body in the tomb; Peter went into the tomb and said that the body definitely was not there.

He saw the linen wrappings lying there and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, but it wasn't lying with the other linen wrappings; it was rolled up in a place by itself. John entered the tomb and was overwhelmed by the disappearance of Jesus. So they left the tomb and went back to their place of hiding.

But Mary stayed, stunned and fearful. As she wept, she bent over and looked in the tomb, and there she saw two angels in white, one at the place where Jesus' head had lain, and other at the place where the feet had been. "Woman, why are you weeping?" they asked her. "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him," she responded. She turned around and saw someone whom she supposed to be the gardener, the one who attends to the burial sites. She did not know it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She was astonished at his words and through her tears implored him to tell her where the body had been taken. "Where has he been taken?"

If you tell me, I will go and take him away.” And then she heard it, the sound that would ring in her ears and in her heart for the rest of her life: “Mary!” he said her name. “Mary!” and in an instant, she knew who he was. “Teacher,” she cried and fell to her knees in front of him, seeking to embrace him. “Mary, 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.’” And with tears of joy, Mary ran from the place and went to the disciples, announcing, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.