

A 2014 John 20:1-18 Easter Sunrise
14-04-20 Resurrection Morning of Our Lord

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen Savior,
Jesus Christ....Amen.....

We have all entered Mary Magdalene's story this morning. Up while it was still dark, we made our way through an abbreviated morning routine. The darkness symbolizes a lack of knowledge – just like Nicodemus had come with uncertainty to Jesus when it was dark – Mary plods her way to the tomb not knowing what awaits her, or... doesn't.

However while Mary was going to the tomb to *remember* Jesus in the last place that she saw him, we come *seeking* Jesus, knowing that Mary will find the tomb empty and later that she will discover that Jesus has risen from the dead. So we walk with Mary this morning. She's our teacher and guide as we make our way to the garden.

I remember the garden tomb in Jerusalem. We made our way out of the old city Damascus gate and travelled a bit north - just a few blocks, past synagogues, mosques, and Christian churches, there were restaurants and schools. Two blocks away is a major highway, just next to the garden is a modern day bus garage, and on the cliff overlooking the garden is a cemetery.

But stepping foot into the garden was peaceful amidst all the hustle and bustle outside. All kinds of palm trees and flowering plants. Benches along the pathways for reflection and contemplation. Some people hurried to the tomb,... others took their time drinking in their surroundings. But eventually all of us gathered in the courtyard of the tomb.

There was no stone covering the entrance, just a low, yawning doorway that led inside. We all bent over and looked in..., with Mary in our thoughts. And just as all the others who looked inside *that* day and ever since have found,... the tomb was empty. Jesus' body wasn't lying there. Of course it wasn't there. All we saw was an empty tomb,... the most significant, overpowering, *fantastic emptiness* in my life and yours.

This walk to the tomb is very much like walking our labyrinth path. We walked the chalk path between rain showers this year... with the cemetery, the church buildings, neighbors, and Liberty Bay all in view. The pathway takes you meandering closer and then farther and finally into the middle, all the time spent in prayer and meditation with your Lord, but not knowing what blessing you'll find at the middle.

Mary found a stone rolled away and ran to tell the disciples. I picture her trip *to* the tomb as a somber, slow, plodding affair, wanting to go... not really wanting to get there. But then a mad dash away from the tomb to get some what... help?... Explanation?

Two disciples had a foot race going back to the tomb, the Disciple Jesus Loved won the race, but didn't go in. Peter, the always impulsive-and-forward Rock of a Disciple, just barged right into the open tomb.

Peter scans the scene and ponders what happened. It can't be grave-robbers because the linen wrappings and the face cloth were still there. But Jesus' body is gone. Then the other disciple who reached the tomb first went in and saw and believed. He saw what the empty tomb meant... like the man who had been born blind, he saw Jesus and believed. And then both Peter and the other disciple went back to their homes.

But Mary stood there... weeping. And finally she bent over to take a look for herself. There were 2 angels sitting there, and they spoke to her in duet: Woman, why are you weeping?... Which is what Jesus asks her, too.

All Mary knows is that Jesus' body is gone. And that the disciples went home without a word. And the angels and then a gardener are being nice to her. Her Lord is gone... And it's strange that she doesn't recognize Jesus standing right there. Where have they taken him? "Mr. Gardener, have you taken him someplace? Let me go and care for my Lord..."

"Mary!" "Rabbouni!" The resurrected life is different. It's intimate, personal, and very, very public. For Mary and for you, Jesus comes in all his risen glory to accompany you as the crucified gardener, dirt under his fingernails and the marks of life and death showing in his body... to stand with you in all of life's trials.

And Jesus comes to you in all his risen glory, accompanying you in your own experience of life's drama and cradling your life in his. As St. Paul has written to the Colossians, "...you have died (we die little deaths to sin every day), and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Your life, your every day is part of Jesus' every day.

You live in Christ because he beat death and was raised to life again that he might bring you with him to the glory that is in God. I'm not exactly sure what "glory" means or what it looks like, but being part of Glory in Jesus is a good and gracious thing.

God's glory in Christ is his presence with you, and God's glory in Christ is your assurance that Jesus loves you, freed you from sin now, and will raise you after death. God's glory in Christ is present every time you share your faith with another. God's glory in Christ was present when Mary left the tomb for the second time, and she ran to the disciples with the news, "I have seen the Lord!" I get it! I see what the man who had been born blind saw! It's Jesus! Now raised to life eternal for you and me and all people.

God's glory and your life in Christ come to you on their way to the next person. Walking with Mary this early morning takes you right back into the world – to your friends and disciples, to your familiar places and even some not so familiar places. But you don't go alone, you go in intimate duet with the risen Christ, different, changed,... made new.

Amen.....