



Easter
Rev Cate Thorn

Year A, Easter
Acts 10: 34-43; John 20: 1-18
9 April 2023

Here we are, Easter day has dawned, new light of a new day, new light of Christ life with us. With great joy and much acclamation we greet this day. Yet I find I want to be quiet, still.

Have you not had enough of that in Lent, you might enquire? Reflecting on this event of Easter, the enacted rituals, the traditions we follow to remind us and return us to this foundational event, greatest festival in our faith calendar, it occurred to me that they are in large part rituals of grieving and letting go. Today, you say, today is different. Yes and no, even after death, when Jesus body's gone and the man appears who is stranger to the disciples, then suddenly they recognise as Jesus, they cannot hold him, Mary's asked to let him go – grieving and letting go.

I guess we know the story well enough that, even if we with enthusiasm join the jostling hosanna-ing crowds of Palm Sunday, our enthusiasm's tempered with sadness for we know what is to unfold. The rest of Holy Week as we tell the story of Jesus' last supper, his betrayal, Gethsemane agony, trial, as we stumble with him to place of his crucifixion, witness his death, we do so somberly and quietly. We do not think to shout out in protest, we do not say – it should not happen this way, we will not agree, we will support this Jesus, we will rally and be as this Jesus is, we will defy the power systems of our day. This Easter event does not seem to stimulate in **us** a spirit of dissension against the injustice of the systems in our

day. Rather we focus on Jesus who is exemplar. Because we've joined ourselves to a strand of tradition that says and sees there's more in this than just one act, and just one man in time. We've come to proclaim divine presence in Jesus whose acts defy the human powers at work in our world. So perhaps we trust it to **divine** power to overcome injustice. Our still, witnessing silence expressive of our willingness to be aligned with such divine power yet reluctance to act, for laid bare before us is the crucifying reality of what can happen.

Or maybe it's simpler than that. It doesn't occur to do other than we've always done, for that's the practice of our religious tradition. Liturgies and rituals of grieving and letting go are in keeping with the Passion time that leads to Easter Day. Grieving and letting go of God with us, God incarnate, Jesus begotten not made Son of God.

Just three months ago we celebrated the season of Christmas. We prepared ourselves to receive and welcome the Christ child born in our midst, God with us. God in form we identify with, made of flesh and blood, like us, vulnerable to all that is life in this world. We rejoiced to know God walks with us, present in the world in tangible, relatable, knowable ways. Which is great, but tempting for us to proceed to make God in our own image. Replete with ideals and expectations of God, complete with conditions and regulations to define who's acceptable and who can gain access.

The Passion story reveals how inadequately God as we imagined, the Messiah of our hopes and expectations comes up to the mark. In the story of this season and in our liturgy we put to death God who threatens our accustomed way of living and being. And we see we have a part in it. With altars stripped on Maundy Thursday, kneeling before Jesus hanging crucified on Good Friday, emptiness of Holy Saturday, we feel the stark absence of God. Sure, intellectually we can distance ourselves see it as simply an

enactment of ritual. But, you know, it gets under our skin, strikes at our heart, bereft, we experience what absence of God might be like.

At Christmas we create God with us, at Easter we sacrifice that God. We didn't intend this. We only wanted to kill the God who was not of our preferring. When we realise what we've done we find we are left with nothing, our hands are empty, our hearts torn open.

Then quietly as the light of Easter dawn creeps across the landscape of our lives we feel small flicker of hope flare in our torn open hearts. There's something about this flicker that's familiar. We know it and yet, like those first disciples, we don't quite recognise it. This life of God arising - it is new to us. We need to learn the shape it now takes. Jesus asks we not hold onto him, that we free him from our bondage to that which has died. Free ourselves to discover God who is still with us yet in ways we're still to know. That flicker of hope catches and we find our hearts are burning within us. With great joy we rush to share with those who are with us on the way of our experience, our hope filled meeting again and together our voices rise in thanksgiving, Christ is risen we say. He is risen indeed!

The heart burning joy, hope filled energy arises out of our letting go and waiting in the dark absence of not knowing. It unsettled and disturbed, disrupted and dislodged us. Let's not be tamed too soon, crib ourselves to fit the shape of who we were. Let's pay attention instead, allow that we're being changed, transformed. And risk participating more deeply as the life of God in the world, embodying and enacting the change and transformation we experience.