



Easter

Rev Cate Thorn

Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 24:1- 12

17 April 2022

Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Great. Yet what we hear today is pretty inconclusive, an idle tale not believed, a witness amazed who head home. These are the highlights of today's gospel. This is what, with expectant hope, we've been preparing for. Easter morn dawns to absence, no-thing, no-body.

We've walked our way, or perhaps stumbled and tripped our way through holy week. We've journeyed a way of entrapment, accusation, trial, whipping and weeping, crucifixion, death and stone sealed darkness.

Today, in breaking light of new day, women come. With perfumed oils and unguents of anointing, women come. Hands and hearts prepared, these women come, to tend and bless their beloved, sacred scented oil and tears of grief flow mingling down.

Prepared, ready, in deep sorrow expectation they find ... no-body. Tangle of linen cloth enough for them to know, this was the place. Perplexed we hear.

Terror prostrates them only when the radiant light of angelic presence appears beside them. 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.'

At this point in the story there's nothing to see, just wisps of promise in words previously spoken. "Remember," they're told, "recall what was said." The women witnessing, as we the hearers are now, are redirected to the story "that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

This is all we know, this is all the women know. Their beloved Jesus who they'd come to tend, anoint, bless and lay to rest isn't here because, the angels in terrifying shining robes say, he's risen.

I'm not sure we've any more idea of what this means than the terrified women bearing witness to the angels' reminder.

I think we can bear the weight and distress of Good Friday, the bleak absence of Holy Saturday **because** we know the joy of dawning Easter Day.

Yet in the moment of each day we're not granted such respite. If we've courage to dwell present to what is known in each of those days, we come to reach deeply into the belly of our existence. Astonished, horrified, sorrow filled, we meet ourselves. We see our potency. We impact our world, our choices, our words, our actions can be deadly. We change things and we need to pay attention.

When we hear this gospel we've heard so many times before, where do our minds go? Do we leap to the stories yet to come, of Christ risen, resurrected - however we imagine that, whatever we believe or disbelieve, literal or literal denied. Are we (perhaps quietly) a bit sceptical, a bit unbelieving, surely it's figuratively intended or a story written back to make sense of things. Maybe we've heard it said that Jesus' body was moved, to be interred once the Sabbath was over, before the women arrived, or his body stolen to discredit. These are just some of the many ways our minds could go when presented today with linen cloths and no body.

I wonder this Easter day whether we could pause and be present to this moment. This still point before the stories of Jesus after death meetings, before the rhetoric, the persuasion of belief-so-to-belong ramps up. Stay with what our gospel tells us, pause, perplexed before this unexpected absence. Remember the events that led here replete with suffering, abandonment, death and grief. Along with some strange promise of new life rising.

Acknowledge that maybe still, we don't really get what this means. And that maybe that's OK.

Easter day always feels different, dawns brighter, with a sense of relief. It's strange really, I wonder if it's the same for those who don't know this narrative. When I look at what the gospel for the day actually says, it doesn't give much ground for reassurance. There's nothing carefully explained, certain guarantee that things are A-Okay. So I began to wonder about the weighted significance given this day or perhaps more correctly, this pivotal event in our religious story.

What do we want this story to tell us? What do we want to be true? For it to answer our deepest fears: about death and life's brevity? Assure us we've ultimate meaning and purpose? That our assumptions about life are valid and true, not just things we make up? It's as if we want something certain that's more than us to steady and hold us.

We come expectant as Easter Day breaks. We pause, uncertain, with the press of our fears, perplexed. As light pierces, hope stirs. **This** day dawns brighter, our burden seems lighter. The gospel account gives us no certainty. Rather than grapple for this, let us today be opened to uncertainty, promise laden uncertainty. Let's resist assuming we already know how this 'do not look for the living among the dead, he has risen' life will go. Instead, let's **remain** open to learn and willing to be surprised as the presence of this risen life does and will appear in us and around us.