

John 20:1-18

Early 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.

To the person who has attended church regularly around Easter this is a familiar reading.

In the early hours of the first day of the week, having been unable to do anything practical on the Sabbath Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. In the different gospels there are slightly different records of the events but such is the nature of recording events later, which occurred during a time of grief and shock.

After all of the sitting around on the Sabbath there was running around on this day. It was when Mary stood weeping outside the tomb that things changed. In the calm she looked again into the tomb and this time saw two angels, messengers from God. In most records of angelic encounter in Scripture there is normally fear but not on this occasion. After explaining her position, why she was weeping, she turned and found Jesus standing by her; though at first she did not recognise him.

It was the sound of her name, from his lips, that changed her understanding of the situation. It was Jesus standing by her.

That first Easter morning was not a time of great exuberance; it was initially a time of confusion and seeking a rational explanation for what the close followers of Jesus saw.

It was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when writing the Sherlock Holmes stories said "when you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

The disciples were seeking to find out the truth, and at the end of the day – literally for the people on the road to Emmaus – they realized that the improbable and seemingly impossible had happened. The one who was crucified, dead and buried was back in their midst.

In different places and in different manner Jesus was amongst them. Each encounter built upon the previous in changing the perception of the disciples and their on-going relationship with God and each other.

On this Easter Sunday amongst the excitement of alleluia's and the singing communally our Easter Hymns for the first time since 2019 make time to be still and encounter Jesus by your side as he opens the Scriptures to you.