

A Reflection for Easter Sunday



by Revd Christina Mason

On Easter Sunday we proclaim the message of the resurrection. Christ is risen, and the world is changed. There are several different accounts of the resurrection. The one set for this Sunday is John 20, 1-19. This account describes the experience of Mary Magdalene who went to Jesus' tomb and found it empty. She went there IN THE DARK and this darkness is significant, as I will come on to later.

Mary runs to fetch Simon Peter and John who come to investigate, but they go home, leaving Mary weeping on her own. Then, although not immediately recognizing him, she saw Jesus. The words of the passage at this point are deeply touching. Jesus uses her name "Mary" and she immediately recognizes him.

The dark that John mentions is symbolically important. The writer of this gospel often tells his readers when it was dark. It was dark when the Jewish leader Nicodemus came to question Jesus leading to him seeing the light and following Jesus. It was night when Jesus walked on the water to his terrified disciples and, John writes 'it was night' when Judas left the meal to go to betray Jesus. Jesus' arrest and trial in front of the Jewish authorities were in the dark, illegally, it has to be said, because apparently at that time, all trials needed to be held during the day. And we know from the other gospels that darkness descended on the whole land at midday while Jesus was on the cross.

Darkness has theological as well as literal meaning. In the resurrection God's light breaks into the darkness, not to dazzle, but to give light we can walk by. It is the same today. We can ask the risen Jesus, the Light of the world, to shine in our lives, to lighten the path and to show us the way.

John concentrates on Mary in a very human way. It was Mary's love and desire to follow Jesus that was rewarded by her encounter with the risen Jesus on that first Easter morning. It was the faithful woman who stayed behind when the others had returned home, who acted on her distress and wept for love of him. It is significantly recorded that she was the first to meet Jesus, the first to learn that Jesus was to be loved and followed but now in a different way, and she was the first to be sent by Jesus to proclaim the good news of the resurrection. The remarkable thing is that ordinary people like tearful and confused Mary Magdalene, were caught up in God's bigger picture.

Today, as we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we perhaps can go some way to grasping its truth. It all began with Mary going to tell the disciples that Jesus was ascending to his father. The men listened, believed, and followed her leadership in proclaiming the resurrection which breaks into the world's darkness with light. Like Mary, each of us is uniquely placed to shine God's light wherever we live and work and with all those we meet.

Amen