

Karen Hollis  
Easter Sunday  
John 20:1-18  
In the Stillness

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Um

Christ is risen . . . **Christ is risen indeed!**

The story of Jesus' resurrection is such a fixture in our culture, I can't even remember hearing the story for the first time. I don't remember having a moment like the disciples where they're trying to work out what has happened.

The sun sets on Holy Saturday not with a show of brilliant colours, but as silently as the earth and air and water are still. Mary ventures out of her home into the stillness of the very early morning before dawn. If you're up in the wee hours of the morn, you know it is a holy time . . . a time for the sleepless, and the monks holding vigil in a new day not yet stirring. It is a space where the veil between God and the world is very thin . . . in places even imperceptible. Perhaps Mary is one of the sleepless . . . perhaps she had a habit of waking early to pray like Jesus did. Presumably, on this morning, she has herbs with her to anoint Jesus' body, making her way to the tomb, even with an emptiness inside. She goes out on what we know as Easter Sunday not with the joy of new life in her bones, but somewhere within the aching of Good Friday and the emptiness of Holy Saturday.

God creates us to move through this cycle of renewal: this cycle of life, death, followed by space and waiting before new life emerges. The space of Holy Saturday cannot be rushed – for many of us, the joy of Christ's resurrection is mixed with a kaleidoscope of thoughts and emotions ranging from the stuff of life to the spaces of Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Life is often a mixture of joy and grief – we don't have to choose one or the other on any given day, rather they exist together as part of a whole.

A while later, after Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved examine the tomb, Mary remains in the stillness, weeping, as the first beams of morning light emerge from behind the hills. Why hadn't the other disciples seen the angels when they went inside the tomb? Have they just arrived or are angels easier to see through tears? "When people are afraid angels tell them not to be. When people are in tears, angels ask why, inviting us to say it out loud."<sup>1</sup> They have taken my Lord; they have taken my hope; my future; my health; my beloved; my planet; my tradition; my life is in ruin; the thing I love is broken beyond repair . . . our grief is concentrated in Mary's grief.

Woman, why are you weeping. For the third time that day Mary shares her concern: she said it to the other disciples, she said it to the angels, now she says it to Jesus, she says it with clarity, willing to hear herself speak the words out loud. "They have taken away my lord, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him." She thinks he is the gardener . . . and on a level, she is not wrong . . . here Jesus stands: "he is the new Adam, the gardener, charged with bringing the chaos of God's creation into new order, into flower and fruitfulness. He has come to uproot the thorns and thistles and replace them with blossoms and harvests;<sup>2</sup> Jesus the gardener is the one who transforms the things that harm us . . . even the things with which we harm ourselves . . . into new life planted in us. He speaks her name, "Mary" as if to say, look into my eyes and see what God's love can do!

God's love can show us how to unlock the door of freedom in our own lives. Jesus himself went through the transformation of death into life because God never let him go . . . God went with Jesus to the darkest place humans know and raised him to new life. This is God's way, to meet us in the darkness and help us find the light. God doesn't erase the past and put things back together the way they were – resurrection bears the scars and marks of life and death.

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<sup>1</sup> John for Everyone Part 2, p. 146

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

God promises on this day and all days new life that will take your breath away . . . that will make you laugh out loud from a place within that you thought was long dead. The God of all creation says there is new life in you yet! Thanks be to God!