

Easter Sunday

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Introduction

Conflict is often riven with conflict. It seems obvious to say but it's worthwhile reflecting on. Conflict opens up conflicted stories about the truth. Something happens that has caused a rift, and then the question is "What happened?"

People are believed and not believed. Some people are not believed because of facts. Some people are not believed because of the kind of people some people think they are. Sometimes the truth comes in a way that disrupts the power of those who wish the truth to be in a certain way.

In all of these experiences, the resurrection comes as an invitation to surprise. And a scandal.

As we mark Easter Sunday, our prayer is that we can move into truth – with all its reforming power.

This is a reflection for Easter Sunday. If you wish, you will find a reflection on the Spirituality of Conflict website for the drama of Good Friday Week ([click here for that Good Friday reflection](#)), narrated particularly through the lens of how Jesus shows loving power in the face of power that thrives on violence. As you prepare for Easter Sunday, the writing team all send you our deepest wishes for a prayerful time during the drama of Holy Week.

Text

Luke 24: 1–12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they

remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Comment

What is it like to not be believed? I imagine that most people have had some experience of this; and others have had lifetimes of this.

At school, people know the experience of not being believed. Someone does something, and someone needs to account for it, and someone is not believed.

Small injustices can simply be a mirror for the larger injustices of a world: in a family, in a society, in a power system where the insights of some are blatantly rejected because of pre-determined prejudices. There are all kinds of reasons why a person is not believed: you're too young; you're too female; you're too gay; you're the wrong colour; you're the wrong age; you're the wrong social status; you're the wrong educational status; you're the wrong.

In the economy of Easter Sunday, it both the form and the content of resurrection that is shocking.

The content: that love might be as big as this.

The form: that love might be as challenging as this.

In the resurrection story, the male disciples were invited into an eternal truth that required them to fundamentally change the way they saw temporal power: women's testimony was considered an *idle tale*. And they were products of their time and place, so they operated within the imaginative strictures of this era.

In order to pay attention to the invitation of the gospel, they must amend their associations of power, and their practices of disempowering in the here-and-now.

We see the same revolution happening in the 5th century text named 'The Gospel of Mary Magdalene'. In the ninth chapter, read how the notion of holy testimony from a woman is being discussed:

When Mary had said this, she fell silent, since it was to this point that the Savior had spoken with her. But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, Say what you wish to say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas. Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. He questioned them about the Savior: Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us? Are we to

turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us? Then Mary wept and said to Peter, My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I have thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior? Levi answered and said to Peter, Peter you have always been hot tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why He loved her more than us. Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect Man, and separate as He commanded us and preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Savior said. And when they heard this they began to go forth to proclaim and to preach.

Today's gospel invites all of us to consider our relationship to change, truth and personhood. Are we opposed to hearing things from certain groups of people? Wherever those corners are, it is likely we will find God there, resurrecting today, with an invitation towards a new form of power and love.

Friends, a happy and a holy Easter to you, may we all be brought more and more into the beloved community.

Response

Lent is so often a time for giving up things, and also for taking up things.

As we are finishing Lent, consider what Easter practices might be of benefit: taking up a practice of self reflection when you find yourself disbelieving someone; or taking up the practice of resurrection when you find yourself being disbelieved. Telling people you believe them might open up stories of hope and survival that have been long hidden, waiting for the trusting light of kindness.

Let us let an Easter light shine into the way we respond to people.

Prayer

Surprising Son of God
you revealed the truth to women
who were not believed by men.
You are in the voices of the unbelieved
and the ignored.
So bring us towards each other
Bring us towards
the truest truth.
Because here, if anywhere,
will we find you.
Amen.

Further Reading

There is a [helpful introduction to the Gospel According to Mary Magdalene here](#).

If you're interested, you'll find [the text of The Gospel of Mary Magdalene](#)

here. Note, like many of the gnostic texts, it's fragmentary.

Season: Passiontide

Themes: Argument and Anger