

Easter Sunday; The Resurrection of the Lord

04.04.2021
By Sarah Hills

Introduction

We have journeyed through Holy Week, from the false triumph of Palm Sunday through a garden of violence to a hill of death. We now find ourselves in a garden at Jesus' tomb. On Good Friday we journeyed with relationships of confusion, disappointment, misunderstanding which became full of fear, hate, murderous intent. Now we meet grief, astonishment, belief and ultimately understanding.

Text

John 19:38-42 and 20:1-18

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

~~

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. So 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.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and 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. They 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.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus 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."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Comment



I would like to start with a story of a peace walk which takes us from Good Friday through to Easter Day. We cannot have one without the other. The walk took place in Northern Iraq a few years ago. About 20 of us from Europe walked with local Iraqi Christians, Muslims and Yazidis, many of them internally displaced refugees.

We walked for peace, to proclaim the possibility of peace in that fought over space. On Good Friday we visited a village about 30km from Mosul – a village that had been

destroyed by ISIS, the villagers having all fled or worse. It was a place of destruction, completely devoid of life. Houses were rubble, shops damaged, and the church though still standing had been desecrated, the altar broken and lying in rubble. We could hear Mosul being shelled. We held a Good Friday service in that desecrated church. We laid candles that we had brought with us – in the shape of a cross in front of the destroyed altar and prayed the prayers of Good Friday, prayers for healing, for the end to that conflict, for peace.

On Easter Day we returned to that deserted village and desecrated church. But this time, the bleakness in the Church was transformed. The same rubble was there, the same bullet holes in the walls, the same broken crosses and hacked memorials. But there were people from the surrounding villages, flowers on the altar, children dressed in white, and a packed church there to proclaim the hope of the resurrection, the hope of peace and the possibility of rebuilding. The local Peshmerga, the soldiers came to receive their



Easter communion. There were even painted eggs and chocolate after the service. The foundation of a rebuilt community was born that day.



It was in many ways an extraordinary walk. Risky, at times truly dangerous. As we left that church in the destroyed village, we had to walk carefully for fear of unexploded ordinances just off the path. But in that unexpected and risky journey we met the face of Christ in the other.

Mary Magdalene at the tomb in the garden saw the face of Christ. She believed that he was there with her. 'I have seen the Lord', she told the others. Isn't that what the resurrection is? The acknowledgement that grief and astonishment can be transformed into belief and the ultimate understanding that love overcomes everything. 'I have seen the Lord'. Alleluia, amen!



Response

Can we believe that we too have seen the Lord?

Prayer

As we reflect on the photos of the desecrated church in Iraq, the journey from Good Friday to Easter Day – the rubble altar, the prayers for Good Friday and the bread of Christ on the altar on Easter day, so we pray for reconciliation and love for all

God's people. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia, Amen.

Season: Easter

Themes: