

Sunday 17th April 2022 Easter

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Reading John 20:1-18

Reflection 1

Mary in her sorrow goes to visit the tomb in which Jesus has been laid. Imagine her shock to find the tomb open, in despair she runs to tell Peter and offers the only explanation she can think of, they have taken Jesus' body. We, like many others might ask who has taken it, why have they taken it and where have they taken it? There have been many theories over the years, but they are simply theories for we cannot know, and to believe in such theories is to deny the resurrection.

Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved run to the tomb. The other disciple gets there first but it is Peter who enters. Which one would you have been? The disciple who looked in from the outside, perhaps dreading what he would see, or Peter rushing in perhaps driven by anger at the thought that someone had taken Jesus.

There is no body. The wrappings from the body remain, one discarded lying on the ground, the other from around Jesus' head is folded carefully and sits where his head would have been. The other disciple follows Peter in, what do they think, surely if someone had removed the body, they would have taken the wrappings also. The first glimmer of hope flickers but they can have no idea of what has happened. The notion of resurrection, of life beyond death is not widely accepted in Jewish circles of the time and even though Jesus has hinted that he would rise from death, the disciples probably had no comprehension of what that might mean. Yet, there is no body in the tomb.

Peter and the other disciple leave to tell others what has happened but Mary stays, full of grief and now confusion. She sees two angel like figures who ask her why she is grieving. How would you have answered – what sort of question is that? Then she sees another figure who she thinks is the gardener and she asks him if he knows anything. He says her name and in that moment she senses Jesus presence, perhaps it was the way he said her name, perhaps it was something deeper, whatever it was she sees and she knows. We do not see God in the sense of a strange being but we do hear and we sense and we also know.

Readings 1 Corinthians 15:19-21
 Acts 10:34-43

Reflection 2

In our readings from Corinthians and Acts we have Paul and Peter sharing their thoughts on resurrection. Paul is obviously wrestling with some in the Corinthian community who do not believe in resurrection, and he is quite blunt in his assertions, if you don't believe in our resurrection in eternal life then Jesus was not resurrected, and they had all be fooled. Paul does believe, although we get the confusion arising between Jesus and Christ that stems from the sloppy use of the term Christ. Jesus was the Christ, but there have been other expressions of the Christ before and since. Perhaps our understanding of sainthood in some way is an expression of the Christ. How central to your faith is resurrection, is it important and what do you understand by it?

Some years ago, I explored resurrection from the perspective of quantum theology in a reflection called Easter Mystery (copy available). I do believe in life beyond this life but I do not believe in the resurrection of the body, rather I believe that the cosmic energy which encapsulates the body in this reality of time and space, at death lets go of the body and continues in another expression, another reality which is forever part of that which we call God. I do believe that at certain times in certain circumstances we are aware of the presence of a loved one even though their body has died, our imagination may even create the illusion of that person.

In our reading from Acts, Peter talks of his belief in the resurrection and also about the resurrection appearances which I have long believed were an important aspect of our hearing the stories of Jesus. Without that sense that Jesus had visited them after his death would the disciples ever have had the courage to leave the locked room of their fear, let alone travel to Jerusalem at Pentecost and become witnesses to the message of Jesus, and the power of the Spirit?

Our experience of communion has been based on the Last Supper with all its remembrance of betrayal and denial, of guilt. What if our experience of communion was based on resurrection meals, on a celebration of resurrection and eternal life, would it empower us more? I believe it might.

Poem – love unwrapped

In the breeze a feather floats.
Is it falling or is it dancing?
Is it tossed by the wind or using the wind?
What do you see?
What do you believe?

In the early morning the disciples looked into the tomb.
The wrappings lay, one folded, one discarded.
What did they see?
What did they believe?

Death came, but love lives.

Perhaps a folded cloth speaks of time to prepare
and a discarded cloth of sudden death.
Why both?
A reminder perhaps
that however it comes death is not the end,
the spirit that once gave the body life
is free as a feather to dance in wind,
and the wrappings of this world no longer define it.

We talk of seeing but it is not a body we see.
It is the evidence of life beyond death,
it is the feather dancing in the breeze,
the kindness of a stranger,
the sight of love making a difference,
that first laugh after sorrow,
the lifting of a heart from despair,
it is hope.

Resurrection is love unwrapped,
dancing in the breeze
and free to go wherever it is needed,
touching us, embracing us
and reminding us that life goes on.



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Suggested Hymns

Where you there... this could be split either side of the John reading
Thine be the glory
He is Lord, he is Lord