

Easter Sunday
Year C

Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:19-25
John 20:1-18

As I mentioned last night, the four gospels and the Resurrection stories are like four portraits of a person - each one has some of the same basic materials, but each emphasizes a different aspect of what is being viewed. Like any eye-witness situation, details vary. Last night, we explored Luke's version of the story. This morning, we see what John has to say.

John begins even before daylight. It was still dark when Mary Magdalene made her way back to the tomb where she had seen Jesus' body laid on Friday. What led her back so early we are not told, but we might consider the grief she bore that morning. She couldn't wait to get back to say her goodbye one more time. Perhaps, she wanted a little time to herself before the other women arrived. We just don't know. But, here she was, approaching the tomb and, in her grief, noticed the stone had been rolled away. She didn't look in, she didn't walk around to find an explanation, she just ran. She ran back to where the disciples were staying and told Peter and the other disciple what she had seen - the stone had been rolled away. What did she tell them? "They (it's always the unknown, they) have taken the body."

Peter and the other disciple decided they needed to investigate. They ran to the tomb, with the other disciple outrunning Peter and getting there first. However, he only looked in - he did not enter the tomb. Why, we don't know, but it may have been out of respect for the tomb or simply fear. Peter, in his usual impulsiveness, immediately went in and saw the wrappings lying there. They both saw the evidence - the linen wrappings lying where the body had been and the other disciple believe. What exactly he believed, we are not told, but we are told they returned home not understanding the scriptures.

At this point, we have three people who have witnessed the empty tomb. The two men just went back home, perhaps a bit perplexed, but in agreement that the body had not been stolen (who would have taken the time to unwrap the body if grave robbery was the motive). Only Mary stayed behind, still in grief and, in all likelihood, confused. When she looked into the tomb this time, it was no longer empty, but two angels were sitting where the body of Jesus had been. "Why are you weeping?" When asked that, Mary must have thought these guys were clueless. Why wouldn't she be weeping? The body of her Lord and Teacher was missing and she had no idea where the body might be! As she turned around, she saw a man and he asked her the same question, "why are you weeping?" We can only imagine the desperation in Mary's voice when she asked this man where the body of Jesus had been placed.

Then He spoke - "Mary." Her eyes were opened and her grief turned to amazement. Here He was - Jesus - standing before her. Of course, she tried to wrap her arms around Him. Of course, she fell at His feet. Here was her Lord and Teacher standing before her ALIVE. It must have taken

her a few minutes for all of this to sink in, but here He was. And, He had a message for her to take to the disciples. She was the first to announce the Good News of the Resurrection.

The message, though, was more than just a straight statement of the facts. In His message, Jesus changed His wording. No longer were those followers disciples. They were His brothers. The message said Jesus was ascending to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God. The relationship had changed.

That same message is for us today. Jesus did not ascend to only His Father, but to our Father; not just His God, but our God. The relationship is no longer Teacher and student, Master and disciple. We are all part of the same family because of what happened that week. Jesus went to the cross, not because He was a rebel or someone who had defied the religious establishment of His day. Jesus went to the cross for each of us - to change our relationship with God. We are no longer outsiders, but members of God's family.

Jesus Lives Today so that we might face each new day with great expectations. Jesus Lives Today so that we might know our future.

Jesus Lives. Halleluiah!