

*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. 2So 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." 3Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10Then the disciples returned to their homes.*

*11But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12and 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. 13They 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." 14When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" 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." 16Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17Jesus 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.'" 18Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.*

While it was still dark.

That is when Easter happened – while it was still dark.

When incurable diseases were striking down eight year old girls.

When soldiers were burning a poor man's home, raping his wife.

When a baby was crying in hunger because his starving mother had no milk for him.

While it was still dark Easter happened.

God raised Jesus the crucified one, the mocked one, the spit upon one, the abandoned one.

God raised Jesus while it was still dark.

Mary came to the tomb. She was accustomed to the darkness. Her eyes, her heart were adjusted to the darkness.

Just as your heart and mine grow accustomed.

That's the way things are we tell ourselves making our peace with the darkness. Aids orphans in Africa, crack babies in Cleveland, the rich getting richer, the poor struggling more and more. We grow accustomed to the darkness.

For Mary the empty tomb could only mean that Jesus' body had been stolen – more darkness when she had suffered all she could bear. In sorrow she ran to Peter and John. Already the new day had dawned, Jesus was alive, but not for Mary.

Peter and John raced to the tomb. Did they run in anger, in outrage? Or did they run in hope of what this empty tomb might mean?

Peter went into the tomb – saw that the trappings of death were all there: the cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus' lifeless body – the spices, the cloth that had been on Jesus' head – but Jesus was not. Yet for Peter there was still only darkness.

John followed Peter – saw the very same things that Peter did and yet John believed.

One believed and one did not. They had walked the same roads, fished the same waters, and witnessed the same wonders. One believed, one did not. How can we account for it?

It is happening even today, even to you who are gathered here. One among you gives her days to sharing the love and the hope and the joy that is in God's new day – another lives for self alone. One opens his home and his heart to many - another locks his home and his heart up tight. One is generous in tipping, generous in giving, generous in spending - another clings to every penny and will let nothing go. How can we account for the difference?

It was still dark as far as Mary was concerned. She looked into the tomb – spoke to angels there, but had no hope. Jesus himself stood before her but for Mary Easter still had not happened. Thinking Jesus was the gardener she asked for help in finding his lifeless body. A corpse was all she had to cling to.

But then Jesus called her by name: Mary. The new day dawned in her.

Every time you gather with God's people Jesus is calling you by name. He is alive. He wants you to be alive with the life that is in him. In baptism he called your name, in the word that is proclaimed he calls you, as you receive his body and blood he enters into you. He is the light of the new day. He is alive.

But is he sunshine for you? A new day for you? Or have you grown accustomed to the darkness – comfortable with the darkness?

The truth is that out on the hill the soldiers were still nailing people to crosses when Jesus called Mary's name. When it came to crucifixions Jesus' was just one of thousands. And crucifixions are happening still. Not with Roman soldiers, Roman nails, but crucifixions just the same. Injustice, cruelty, evil -the dawn of Easter has not snuffed out this darkness.

And yet when you believe the light that is Jesus shines. And you become part of that light; you become light for others when you believe. You bring the new day of Jesus to them. You share a cup of cold water, you hold the hand of a dying one, you help carry the burden of a weak one, you forgive the one who sinned against you and Easter happens anew.

One day Easter will happen to all creation, all creatures, all life. One day Jesus light will be in everything and everyone and there will be no more darkness.

What a day that will be!