

*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.*

Early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb.

It was on the first day of the week while it was still dark that God had first spoken creation. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

But Mary came to the tomb in a new week, the first day of a new week when there was only darkness.

Have you ever come to a cemetery in that darkness? It matters not whether the sun is shining or the day is cloudy for the darkness is inside.

Sorrow.

Loneliness.

Fear.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. The darkness in her deepened.

*She ran to Peter and John and told them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him."*

How many times when we think we can't take anything more, another burden is piled on: bad news on top of bad news - sickness on top of sickness - death on top of death!

Then Peter and the other disciple whom we think of as John set out and went toward the tomb, running. Peter looked in saw the linen wrappings lying there, the cloth that had been on Jesus head rolled up. Then John went into the tomb, looked and believed that Jesus had been raised out of death. Maybe it was the cloths that triggered his faith, surely someone stealing the body would not have unwrapped it. Then what did they do? Said nothing - went home. They left Mary there weeping in her deep darkness.

She looked in the tomb and saw angels - spoke to the angels, yet not even angels could bring light to this darkness. We should pay attention to this in these times when there is so much talk and interest in angels. The light that Mary needed, the light that you need angels cannot bring.

Mary turned, saw Jesus, but did not know him. Not even when he spoke to her did she know him, *"Woman, why are you weeping?"*

*Thinking he was the gardener she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away."*

All that she knew was to cling to a lifeless body, to cling to a yesterday in which the sun had been still shining. As far as she could see ahead there was only darkness.

*Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!"*

*And she turned and said to him, "Teacher!"*

In that moment there was no more darkness.

God spoke and there was light. Jesus spoke and there was light.

Mary believed.

And unlike that disciple who believed and was silent, she went and told, and there was light.

Easter: we dress this day in bright colors, decorate it with eggs and bunnies as if it were no more than the changing of the seasons from winter to spring.

But for Mary who believed there was a light that shone in the darkness and the darkness never again would overcome that light - Jesus alive.

So often our prayers and our hopes and our dreams are about God fixing up this old creation.

A cure for cancer.

Plenty of food for everyone.

Less stress at work.

Knowledge about tornados and earthquakes.

But in Jesus' dying and rising God is starting all over again.

Not patching up an old tired creation, but bringing the light of the new creation into your heart and into your life now.

You will see that light shining in darkness - always in darkness.

For when the light of the old creation is bright we are fooled into thinking it is all we need: a new house, children coming home with A's on their report card, the Indians winning. Whenever the light of the old creation is shining bright we are fooled into thinking we can have it forever.

Then the sky turns dark and that darkness goes into our heart. And we are Mary looking for a dead body to cling to.

Just when you think that is all you will ever have Jesus speaks light: and though the darkness out there is just as dark as ever, the faith Jesus gives is light shining through from the tomorrow Jesus now lives.

Jesus forgives you.

Jesus proclaims, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus says, "I am the light of the world.

Paul spoke of the new creation first glimpsed on Easter when he spoke of the day when the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.

Mary saw the light of that new day.

Do not fear the darkness of the old creation.

The sun has already risen on the first day of the new creation.

Do not fear the darkness. Christ will be your light.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.