

Lessons From the Empty Tomb

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. – John 20:18 NRSV

I'm still pondering the events of the first Easter Morning. Recalling Friday's fear, what must have been anxiety through Saturday, and the unexpected surprise of an empty tomb, I wonder what the disciples felt and how they reacted. Surely their fear and grief must have shaken and confused them. According to the 20th chapter of John's Gospel, on that Sunday morning, Mary arrived at tomb and found the stone taken away. She ran back and returned with Peter and the other disciple (that's how John referred to himself) who in turn ran to the tomb and looked in and found that Jesus was gone. Then they left. Mary lagged behind, weeping. Jesus appeared to her, and consoled her. She didn't recognize Jesus until he spoke.

Two points from the text leap out for me. Jesus wasn't where Mary expected him to be, and he spoke to her which consoled her and cleared away her confusion.

I don't know about you, but I have a "talent" of looking right at something without recognizing it unless it's where I expect to find it and it looks like I expect it to look. For example, I can't find a box of oatmeal if the package design has changed. And I can never find my pen, unless it is exactly where I left it. Fortunately, my family is understanding and they don't complain too much when I need their help to retrieve an item that is right in front of my nose.

Jesus was right in front of Mary's nose, and she didn't recognize him. She didn't recognize the one she loved. From my own experiences, I understand why. Jesus wasn't where she had left him and his appearance had changed. Even so, when she heard his voice, she knew it was her Jesus.

This Easter was not the one we expected, and it certainly looked and felt differently, and even so, the Christ's words to us are the same; they are words of comfort and grace, and he speaks to us from unexpected places.

Prayer: Loving Jesus, in these days of confusion, speak to us with words of comfort and grace.

Peace be with you, always,

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