**#70 Easter Day 2023 SG 9am BCP**

**John 20: 1-18**

**20**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. **2**So 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.’ **3**Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. **4**The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5**He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. **6**Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, **7**and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. **8**Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; **9**for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. **10**Then the disciples returned to their homes.

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

**11**But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2020%3A1-18&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-26868a)] into the tomb; **12**and 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. **13**They 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.’ **14**When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. **15**Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ 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.’ **16**Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2020%3A1-18&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-26873b)] ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher). **17**Jesus 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.”’ **18**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.

**Matthew 28: 1-10**

**28**After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. **2**And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3**His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. **4**For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. **5**But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. **6**He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28%3A+1-10&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-24199a)] lay. **7**Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ **8**So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9**Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. **10**Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

Mary Magdalene has a starring role in both versions of this story today. She is endlessly fascinating, being the first recipient, in John, of the Good News. Also fascinating is ‘the other Mary,’ who Matthew casually mentions in a throwaway line, as if his first audience would automatically know who he meant.

I wonder if that sense of community means that, of the four Gospels, its *Matthew’s* people who are closest in some way to the people and events that he describes; if he is using a shorthand here, that might imply a generally held knowledge of what went on, on this day, that he’s merely re-telling a well-known story inhabited by well-known people. Perhaps that’s why his account is less elaborate than John’s. Perhaps…well, we could go on…!

According to the earliest commentators, by which I mean people like Irenaeus and Origen, Matthew wrote in his Gospel for his own people, the Jewish community, in Hebrew.

John didn’t, it seems; we see here that he offers a translation of Mary’s ‘Rabbouni’ for people who didn’t have Hebrew. So we have two different audiences for the Good News, two different ‘first readers. ’ Although Mark is taken to be the earliest Gospel, and although some of Paul’s letters are thought to predate even the Gospels, perhaps its Matthew who’s closes to the spirit of the people with whom Jesus shared his faith, sharing his language, even if his was an Aramaic dialect.

I love all of this speculation about all things text-based, because the differences remind us that these words were written by real people for real people, with real feelings. I love worrying at and teasing at what might have happened and when, comparing Gospels and other writings, wondering about what it felt like to be back there in Judea at the same time on this day. I think that’s because we’re joining in with people over the millennia in trying to figure out what the Good News is. That’s the aim and point of all that we do as Chrsitians, we read the stories, and try to live the Good News out in all that we do.

So, what’s the Good News today, the 9th of April? Any ideas?

Strangely, both Gospels today are pretty restrained if you want to extract the sole good news about the Easter Resurrection; they are both seemingly narrating events rather than speculating on the significance of the events. Jesus, thought to be dead, has today risen from the grave, which is a pretty big thing to do; but for John, he is initially unrecognised; ‘are you the gardener?’ - and for Matthew he just says that he is leaving now, which is all very low-key, given that the universe has just changed forever, and that the lives of millions of people will never

be the same again. ‘Who are you’, and ‘I’m going now’…

Perhaps that IS the good news; although Jesus is transcendent, beyond our comprehension, the Messiah, the saviour, the Christ, he still chooses to work humbly in the world within an ordinary, fallible humanity. His first words in John – ‘why are you weeping, for whom are you looking?’ are from the innermost chamber of a pastoral, loving heart; his first words are of concern for *someone else*. In Matthew, he is similarly open; ‘Greetings! Do not be afraid…’ In both accounts it seems to me that he is only and absolutely concerned for how others are feeling, never mind the contortions that he himself has undergone since Good Friday.

The Good News is that his first thought is for us; his first concern is for how *we* are; and his first act - ‘I am going to Galilee’ – is a confirmation that, although everyone thought that all had been lost, really he is just continuing where he left off before Palm Sunday, and he’s continuing from home, from Galilee, from a place of safety for his friends.

The Good News is that he is protected by angels, who are either doing some heavy lifting or some tomb housekeeping, depending who you read. The angels show ordinary humans that all is now well; ok, there are a few things to understand, and I’d love to have lots of detail about the conversations in Galilee, but the Good News is that what he said would happen, has happened. It happened then, and it’s still happening now.

The Good News is that, even if we are as bewildered as the first people, those blessed souls who were there at the time – and I love the adrenaline of Peter and the Other Disciple in John, all they can do is run back and forward in their need to understand, fizzing with energy and incomprehension – even if we ARE that bewildered, the Easter Sunday gift stays the same; He Is Risen for us, and with Mary we can say, ‘I have seen the Lord.’

Happy Easter!

Amen