

Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022: Luke 24:1-12

Like Mary Magdalene and her companions, we come today to look in the tomb, figuratively speaking. If you keep looking, you will see more than someone in white saying, 'He is risen.'

This is the truth: Jesus of Nazareth was, is and ever will be, the Crucified Lord. His Resurrection did not change the reality of death for him, or for us. After the Resurrection Jesus appeared to his followers with gaping side, with nailed impaled hands and feet (24:39-40). While death now has no power over Jesus, or over those who follow him, death remains real. The Resurrection of Jesus conquers but does not eliminate death. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, with Jesus *...what is mortal (is) swallowed up by life* (5:4b). In Jesus, death is the ultimate condition in which God's mercy and love are revealed. The Resurrection did not erase the marks of Jesus' passion and death; the nail-impaled hands still reach out to us in revelation and invitation.

In Hebrews we read: *...Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many...* (9:28a). God's love overpowers sin and heals its wounds. Jesus died on the Cross because God loves us, and willingly went to the place of our greatest fear, endured the most horrible death imaginable, so that every human fear, every human death may be embraced by Jesus, swallowing up death with life. From Jesus' death and resurrection comes new creation; new life born from death. Jesus was nailed to the Cross to conquer death once for all; Jesus will gladly come to the place where evil and death are nailing us.

We come today and we may look in a tomb. This tomb is not in a garden. We are to bend low and look into our own tombs, our own place of sin and death. What fear, anger, or wounds separate you from Christ? What evil, what sins, what idols, what addiction or compulsions are burying your soul? What does Jesus weep for in you? Jesus longs to embrace your wounds, your sins, your death with nail-impaled hands; you, whom Jesus literally loves to death.

Rejoice: we are being raised with Christ. All our failings, sins, and evil, our willful turning from him, our anger and betrayals, our self-dug burials are nothing. The evil in all the human beings who have or will ever live are to God what a feather is to a hurricane. Nothing can conquer God; nothing can overcome God's love for us in Jesus our Crucified and Living Savior. When we surrender our sins God's glory fills us, for God's power is made perfect in our weakness (I Corinthians 15:42-43). Our betrayals only harden our hearts, never God's. Turn, turn, keep on turning, and he will embrace and restore you: his wounds will enfold you and heal your wounds forever.

Rejoice, rejoice: your life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). The place of death in you is now your place of resurrection. Jesus waits, yearning for you in perfect love, to change sin and death into new creation. Death is real but has no power for those with faith in our Crucified Lord, Jesus Christ. And so, even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (BCP, page 483/499).

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN! THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!