

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

It comes so easily to us now, to say those words, but imagine being one of those women!

- Going early in the morning to anoint Jesus' dead body buried in the tomb.
- To cover his body with herbs and spices to ward off the stench of death,
- Only to discover the tomb empty!

They were perplexed, because the linen cloths were still there.

If someone had simply moved the body, they would have taken it wrapped. There would be no cloths in this grave.

But there were cloths – Jesus had left them behind to provide a clue to his resurrection'.

He no longer needed them.

He no longer needed graveclothes because he had burst his bindings with the new life God the Father had given him in the Holy Spirit.

This new life included new clothes for his resurrection body.

He had burst his bindings and burst the door of the tomb as the first human being to ever do so.

When the women arrived, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus' body was not there.

Instead, two messengers met them in the tomb, repeating to them Jesus' own words spoken earlier:

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.

And they remembered. Yes, Jesus had said those very words several times, though nobody quite understood.

Yet, here they were – the women!

The ones always in the background—today, are the front-line witnesses to the truth of Jesus

– connecting his life, his death, his burial, and his resurrection.

Jesus was alive! Just as he had told them would happen.

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These women are like most of us.

We hear many things that we do not understand.

There are people in our lives who say things and we understand each word, but we make no sense of the whole of what they are saying.

It is like that for me listening to sports commentators and stock market reports. They may be speaking English, and I may get a

certain gist, but I certainly cannot say I have understood the whole picture.

We nod our heads and try to make what sense we can, but in the end, we tend to ignore what we don't understand and just do what we've always done.

The women at the tomb were no different.

If they had taken Jesus at his word when he had told them before that he would be handed over, crucified, and rise from the dead, they would not have been at the tomb at all this morning.

They would have stayed at home, enjoying coffee and doughnuts, waiting for the risen Jesus to show up.

After all, a living body does not need to be anointed and spiced to ward off the stench of death.

But they had *not* grasped what he meant, and so, they were at the tomb to care for the body of their dear friend.

And he was there waiting for them

– not as a dead body wrapped in linen cloths and lying on a burial stone
– but in the form of two men in dazzling clothes who told them he is alive, as he promised.

This is the clincher – that these 2 messengers of God knew the exact words Jesus had spoken

So that they could connect the promise with its fulfilment, the Word of God with its effect.

Looking for Jesus? Here among the dead? He is not here – he has risen, just as he said.

For Jesus to be alive means he defeated evil,

- **defeated sin, defeated Satan,**
- **defeated all the elemental forces of the universe,**
- **and now lives to rule over all.**

As it says in Psalm 110:

*The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit by me at my right side
until I put your enemies under your control."*

All God's power has been shared with Jesus, risen from the dead.

There is no power greater than Jesus; there is no authority apart from him.

Today, Jesus has burst the bonds of sin and death that hold us all captive and we get to go through the opening he has made in the rock of our entombed lives.

And where does that opening lead?

To life without fear of death,

- without fear of violence,
- without fear of COVID or cancer or chronic inflammation.

To life with joy, peace, and blessedness in the presence of God.

I know this is hard to believe, especially right now as we continue to watch the horrors of war in Ukraine, to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, to adjust to new realities, to live with the layers of grief that the last 2 years and more have heaped upon us.

It is hard to believe the truth of this message.

But maybe that is because we want magic instead of Jesus – a fairy-tale ending instead of faith, hope, and love.

We want –right now – for everything to be perfect, bright, shiny, and new – like the patent-leather shoes I wore on Easter Sunday when I was 4.

But consider that first Easter – Jesus did not magically transform the world all at once into the Eden it was created to be.

No – he burst the bonds of death to enter the world as it was as a new resurrected being.

HE changed. And as a changed being, he began to change the world.

He began to change the world toward the restoration God has planned from the beginning and which – in the resurrection – is already happening.

Jesus rises to the same Roman-occupied, criminal-crucifying world that killed him, but now, there is a new ending to the human story.

It is no longer fatalism or nihilism or karma or self-destruction that is the goal of existence.

Now, it is life and love.

Jesus risen from the dead gives us the assurance that the world at war, the world of guns and drugs and greed and corruption does not have the last word.

We can let go of our anxiety about the future because it is no longer entirely unknown, or up to fate or some other force.

It is God's future – Love's future – Life's future.

Sure, we don't know all of what will happen to us in the days, weeks, months, and years to come.

It may be very difficult at times.

But, when we live in Jesus and follow him, we know where he leads – to an empty tomb and life eternal for us.

In the Name...

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