

Grief, despair were all she knew that Easter morning - the grim reality of Jesus death. After all, why go out to a tomb. Mary Magdalene went then as we've lived. We are not so different. Not having answers to so many things. Looking for consolation after seeing dreams and hopes go down in defeat. We face many uncertainties now and in the future. We stare into the face of our own mortality. We get broken and confused as Mary that morn. I often wonder why God allows things to play out as He does. Every now and then we see death close up. How death has stolen a loved one. When we momentarily confront death -it terrifies us, then becomes sorrowful and depressing. It means things have changed in our lives and it won't ever be the same again. No doubt Mary thought as we've felt. Going to a tomb aching; hurting, even lonely. She's wanting to perform the highest honor one could do for another by giving Him a proper burial, anoint the dead body, put the spices in that tomb.

Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary." It may be the most touching of all Easter scenes in Scripture. Jesus had never left Mary, not even in death... He spoke her name. She heard His voice. What changed everything for her, changes everything for you... He called her by name! The presence of Christ! His Words. To hear His voice. Things are never the same again.

No wonder weeping is turned to joy, sorrow turned to gladness for the women and disciples. No wonder you have joy. Joy, is not of human emotions, but a state of being -joy, you being rooted in the historical reality of Jesus death and resurrection and by faith you being joined to Him, joined you to His death, joined you to His life, even now.

Mary thinks He's the gardener *A few times working outside here, I've been mistaken for the gardener, asked if I have authority to sign for a package, if I would give something to the pastor.* Mary is right. He is the gardener. For He is the One by whom all things are made, who continually attends to His creation. It's rather amazing, God in His glory if lifted up in death to draw all people unto Himself. They call it the place of a skull where He was crucified. Ancient Jewish legend has it, it was called this, a skull, because it was a tomb. The burial place of Adam. Whether historically accurate or not, it is certainly theologically accurate; the new Adam dies there - undone is the curse of your sin and death the first Adam brought. On the Friday Adam and Eve created, on another Friday we call Good, mankind recreated in Jesus. As God rested at creation on the 6th day, Jesus rested in the tomb from His work of salvation for you. The sabbath, the holy day of worship, rest for God's people of the Old Covenant. That's why the women don't go to a dead body on Saturday and wait for first light, sunrise Sunday. On the first day -not just of a week but of the new covenant, new creation in Jesus, the first day of eternal sabbath now for all who rest in Him, the 8th day, why that font and ancient fonts have 8 sides. The 8th day, Sunday, the prominent day of Divine Service for the Early Church and to this day, the day of our Lord's resurrection. You stand for Gospel reading each Sunday, not just in honor of Your Lord, but because He is risen and stands upon the earth and this is the very words of your resurrected Lord.

He is risen -and sin and death have no control over you. For deaths cannot hold for Him; neither can it hold you. You belong to Him. He is holy and righteous and eternal. And so are you. He is risen, physically, from the dead and because you belong to Him, you will never die;

your soul will go to heaven at death- there embrace your nail-scarred Lord and your loved ones again, to hear their voices. Never to be separated again. And when He comes again your body too shall rise, perfected as He has risen. It can be no other way.

The presence of Christ. His Word, you hear His living voice here. I feel sorry for our Christian friends; but the truth is I don't have the foggiest idea how to have a true relationship with Jesus apart from the Word and Sacraments. Scripture makes no other connection. Where He has chosen to bring His real presence. The only grace known to us in the living Word of Christ, He spoke your name in baptismal waters, the holy supper -joining you literally to His death and resurrection.

This is His glory, that He would have you here today to celebrate His resurrected life, joined to Him, where heaven and earth joined in Him as in no other way on earth.

An empty tomb, even a risen Lord far away is not what we desperately need. More than anything else in your life, you need your risen savior here. To bind up your wounds, give you the gifts of His death and resurrection.

It changes everything in your life, each day, never the same again. Your risen Lord speaks, when He promises. It will happen. To live in the wake of His resurrection, in joy -that nothing in this life, not even death can take that from you, the life that is yours; your weeping to gladness. Indeed, the Lord is risen!