

He's Alive!!!

John 20:1-18

March 27, 2005

Easter

Gospel Lesson

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.² She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put him!"

³ Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. ⁴ The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. ⁵ He bent down and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side. ⁸ Then the other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed, ⁹ for until then they hadn't realized that the Scriptures said he would rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then they went home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she bent down and looked in. ¹² She saw two white-robed angels sitting at the head and foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ "Why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴ She glanced over her shoulder and saw someone standing behind her. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵ "Why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶ "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned toward him and exclaimed, "Teacher!"

¹⁷ "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God."

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

This is the Word of the Lord Thanks be to God

It's been quite a week. I saw Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, with people cheering and praising Him. They laid palm branches and their robes on the road as He was coming up to them. Everyone was so excited to see him. Then, on Thursday Jesus and His followers started the evening with a dinner and reminiscing over the last few years. Jesus surprised them when he washed their feet. It made them uncomfortable having their master wash their feet. However, He told them it was a blessing to serve those around them; it was not

demeaning to serve. He talked about His death and resurrection and that Judas was going to betray Him. I heard the disciples ask questions of Jesus, they just didn't understand what He was telling them. They couldn't believe anything would happen to Him.

After dinner, Jesus asked them to come and pray with Him in the garden. With eating a big meal, they weren't able to stay awake to pray. I felt bad for Jesus seeing Him frustrated and feeling let down by His friends. His prayers were very moving and asking for God to help Him by not having to go through with what He knew was about to happen. Yet He surprised me when I heard Him say not "Not my will, but Your will be done". I would find it very difficult to not stop the directions of the upcoming events, knowing He was to be hung on the cross and the horrible pain and death. As He was ending His prayers, a group of noisy soldiers approached with Judas leading the way. After Judas kissed Him on the cheek in a welcome, the soldiers strong-armed Jesus and took Him away.

They took Jesus to a trial before Annas, a high priest and the father-in-law of Caiaphas. While Jesus was being questioned, Peter sat by a fire in the courtyard to keep an eye on the situation. People started asking him if he was one of Jesus' followers. Three different times he denied knowing Jesus. When he denied Jesus the third time, I heard a rooster crow and saw a pained look on Peter's face. Jesus had said at dinner the night before that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. Peter had said he would never deny knowing Jesus. Realizing he had denied Christ, Peter turned and walked away and wept bitterly.

After his trial before Annas, he was taken to Caiaphas and then to Pilot, each of them tried to pass Jesus off to the other. None of them wanted the responsibility of making a decision as to what to do with a man that was so controversial. When they took him back to Pilot for the second time, Pilot tried to release Jesus but the crowd was coaxed into asking for the release of Barabas instead. Finally, a frustrated Pilot made a show of washing his hands of the situation and gave Jesus over to be crucified.

While Jesus was being tried, He was beaten, had a crown of thorns painfully pushed down on His head and a purple robe put on Him. Then I could see the pain in His eyes as they took off the purple robe for it was stuck to His wounded skin, and put His own robe back on Him. The soldiers then made Him carry His own cross on the road to Golgotha where He would be nailed to the cross. Simon of Cyrene was standing with the crowd and a soldier pushed him toward Jesus and told him to carry the cross for Jesus. Poor Jesus looked so tired and worn down. He was being punished when He had done nothing wrong. My heart was breaking when I saw how badly He was being treated. I never saw Him do anything against anyone. He only spoke with love for those around Him and for His Father in heaven.

When He got to Golgotha, they nailed him to the cross and placed a sign above His head saying "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". So many people were mocking Him and telling Him to free Himself. The soldiers had taken His robe off and when they saw how beautifully made it was, they rolled the dice to see who would keep it.

With compassion in His eyes, He looked over to His mother and told the disciple standing with her to take her as his own mother and to care for her. He looked so tired and full of pain. Then I heard Him say "I thirst," and a soldier gave Him a drink of bitter wine on a sponge. Then

Jesus looked up to the sky and cried out Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? Which means, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” I had never seen Him look so sad and alone. Then knowing everything was taken care of and that He had accomplished what His Father had sent Him to do, He said, “It is finished” and hung His head and died. I then heard and felt the earth shake in grief and the veil in the temple torn from top to the bottom. The veil covered the entrance to a place set aside that only the high priest was allowed in to pray and talk to God. It was as if God Himself had torn it to say there is no division between my people and me. Please come directly to me with your prayers of joy and concern, talk to me your every waking hour.

Then one of the soldiers went up to Jesus and pierced His side with a spear to make sure that He was dead. They then took His body down and gave it to His family to take to a grave that Joseph of Arimathea had donated. There wasn't enough time to properly prepare Jesus' body for burial so they wrapped Him in material and planned to come back after the Sabbath to properly bury Him. I can't imagine the pain Mary, Jesus' mother, must have felt at watching her beloved son treated this way and killed. Her heart must have been breaking. Mary and the disciples went away to mourn and wait for the Sabbath to end.

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb to care for Jesus' body. She moved slowly, still not believing that they had crucified Him. She was hoping she could talk a soldier into moving the huge stone away from the opening of the cave where Jesus was buried. Then as she approached the cave she was amazed that the stone had been rolled away and the soldiers were gone. As she carefully approached the entrance to the cave, she saw that Jesus was no longer there. She turned to go tell the disciples and saw who she thought was the gardener. Going to Him, she asked if He knew where the body of Jesus had been taken. When He spoke her name, Mary realized it was Jesus. She wept with joy that He was alive. He asked her to go and tell the others that He had been raised from the dead.

Mary ran as fast as she could to go to share the Good News. It was so exciting to see how happy everyone was. I had heard Him preach many times, and He said He was here to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. He had come to bear the weight of our sins and to give each of us the gift of salvation. All we have to do is accept the gift of grace from Him so our sins will be forgiven and we can gain entrance into heaven.

Alleluia, He has risen.

Amen.