

Reflections for Easter and the weeks following

Easter morning greets us with the memory of the stories told of the resurrection of Jesus. At the Easter morning Eucharist, we will hear one of these stories, but each gospel tells of the resurrection in a slightly different way. During our isolation I thought it would be good to read and consider each of these first understandings that Jesus had risen.

I plan to look at the first accounts of resurrection in each of the gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. As far as possible I will include pictures, poetry, ideas for an activity, and points to ponder. Points to ponder are really ways in which we can perhaps deepen our thinking and awareness of God in our lives or simply permission to ask the questions of God and ourselves that are ever present with each one of us.

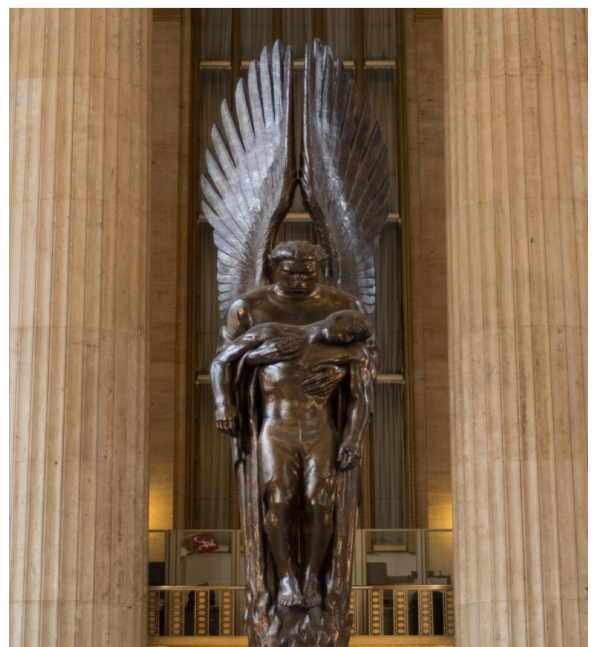
MATTHEW 28. 1-10

Matthew's account of the resurrection is, in some ways, the most dramatic. There are the loud noises of an earthquake, the lightening appearance of the angel, the fearful reaction of the soldiers reducing them to the state of dead men. Yet, read on and there are amazing words from the angel, joy and Jesus himself.

Read Matthew 28. 1-10 to yourself. Read it silently and then out loud.

Image from: *Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository.*

Angel of the Resurrection, the bronze sculpture featured in the Pennsylvania Railroad WW11 memorial



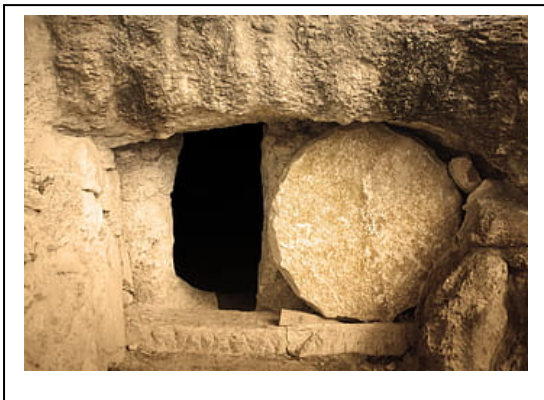
Things to ponder

- 1. The angel in the sculpture is stronger than Jesus, presumably helping him at the point of resurrection. Does this seem strange to you or does it make sense?*
- 2. The women do not go with ointment to anoint but to "look at the tomb". Does this ring bells with you? In your life are there things you need to be able to stand next to and look at?*
- 3. Jesus tells the women to tell the disciples to go back to Galilee. Mark's gospel says the same. Any ideas about why Jesus would say this?*

Things to do

Look at some photographs or memorabilia from your own childhood or early adulthood. Remember those times and give thanks.

MARK 16.1-8



Mark is the shortest gospel and this recount of the resurrection seems almost abrupt in its telling. For me, however, the account is very moving in its expression of fear and dazed confusion.

In your Bibles you will see that there are more verses to this chapter but they are thought to be later additions.

Read Mark 16. 1-8 to yourself. Read it silently and then out loud.

Things to ponder:

1. *The women were wondering who would roll away the stone for them but when they approached, they saw that someone else had. It is not unusual to experience something in our lives which is like a large stone, obstructing and preventing growth into new life.*

Can you picture such a stone in your life?

Did you receive help in rolling this stone away?

2. *Ask yourself what surprises you most about this story. Does it speak personally to you?*

LUKE 24. 1-12

Things to do

Collect some stones or pebbles. Let each one represent a concern you are carrying. Find somewhere to place these, in your mind laying them at the foot of the cross. Ask God to share the burden.

Luke prepares us for the women going to take ointments to Jesus in the tomb by saying that after they had followed Joseph of Arimathea, taking the body to the tomb, they went home to prepare the ointments and perfumes. They waited on the Sabbath and, early in the morning on the first day of the week went to use what they had prepared. We read an account filled with people and personalities acting in the most human way.

Read Luke 24. 1-12 to yourself, silently and then out loud.



Christ steps out of his tomb; the three Maries on their way to the tomb.

National Library of the Netherlands

Things to Ponder

1. *The angel told the women not to look for the living among the dead. It made me wonder whether I ever looked for the living among the dead. If I did what would it mean? Any ideas?*
2. *We read that the women were not believed and that although Peter immediately rushed off to the tomb he still did not believe them. How does this make you feel? Has there ever been a time when you had good news to tell and you were not believed?*

Things to do

1. *Look for some good news and tell someone by phone, text or e mail. Be prepared not to be believed!*

John 20. 1- 18

This is perhaps the most fondly remembered recount of the resurrection or maybe I just love it myself. In it, Mary Magdalene is a star player and her meeting with Jesus is so poignant. Read for yourself and see what you think.

Read John 20. 1-18 to yourself, silently and then out loud.



*Christ appearing to
Mary Magdalene
painted by Juan de
Flandes (1450-1519)
Royal Palace of
Madrid*

Things to Ponder

- 1. Does it seem strange to you that Mary did not recognise Jesus?*
- 2. What significance does it have for you that Jesus asked her not to hold on to him?*

Things to do.

Take a walk outside and taking deep breaths simply enjoy nature.

Read and enjoy the poem that follows.

Easter Dawn

He blesses every love that weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who stood and wept
And would not be consoled. Or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus through her tears
Or recognize the Gardener standing there,
She hardly hears his gentle question, "Why,
Why are you weeping? or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply,
"They took my love away, my day is night."
And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

Malcom Guite from his book "Sounding the Seasons"