

Luke 24:1-12

1 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to the hands of sinners and be crucified and on the third day rise again.” 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

SERMON

Has Easter become so old hat that we brush past the enormity of a body missing from its internment site? Even Roman law deemed grave robbing and desecration a capital offense. Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, mother of James approach the tomb only to find Jesus’ body missing. For them, the empty tomb amounted to desecration of Jesus’ body and dismissal of his memory; and he had only been dead a couple of days.

Mothers to this day in Buenos Aires march in the Plaza de Mayo to honour the ‘*disappeared ones*’ and to call for justice for girls and young women abducted by the military. They march to protest the brutality of a military that would abduct leaders of the mothers’ march and throw them from helicopters into the sea. These women who march today follow in spiritual footsteps of the Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, mother of James. These women are kin to women and girls in Winnipeg who have pressured leaders to comb landfills for the bodies of their abducted and presumed-murdered daughters, sisters, and aunties. Thanks be that some like the present premier listened and began the sad and gruesome task of recovering bodies. Premier Wab Kinew held a public gathering even sang songs of honour for these women who like their sisters in Argentina were “disappeared”. These women may see glimpses of Easter; just not in its fullness. The same is true for us.

We might start our Easter Days with triumphal cries, but Mary of Magdala, James' mother Mary and Joanna standing before the an empty tomb most certainly did not. Their amnesia clears when a messenger helps them re- call all that Jesus told them...this grave was indeed empty because God raised Jesus from the dead—this tomb was as empty as Larzarus' crypt.

We like to speak about new life as we watch crocuses, hyacinths and dahlia's bloom. That's the order of things that new life comes from death. Jesus' resurrection is hardly natural so one can forgive the women for assuming someone stole Jesus' body. One might sort of forgive the disciples for man-splaining and dismissing the women's lived experience as 'fake news'. At least Peter acts in character...charging off to check things out for himself—and even he who had lived with Jesus for a few years was gobsmacked that God did what Jesus said God would do.

Still, it's quite the inferential leap between a vacant tomb and a conclusion that Jesus is risen. Yet we shout out “halleluia he is risen indeed! “ The word of a holy messenger and the witness of three determined women preach this Gospel first.

Like these witnesses and the late-to-the party disciples, we see things in hindsight—the resurrection helps us make sense of things now.

Palm Sunday's protest parade of resistance now amounts to the empire getting its pink slip

Maundy Thursday's mandate to remembrance of love becomes animated by God raising from the dead Jesus, who loves to the very end.

Good Friday's rejection of Jesus and all he stands for—is now met by God's rebuttal and reaffirmation of God's intention to bless and save the world despite any of our human intentions.

The resurrection also directs our gaze forward—Since God has raised Jesus from the dead we can live renewed lives right now. Since God has raised Jesus from the dead we live in hope that God's love has the final word for us, for humanity and for our planet.

To this we can say, halleluia and amen.