

Jesus was dead...

And with him dies the hopes and dreams of the disciples
They thought he was the Messiah, but now he was dead
They were confused and desperate
They didn't know what to do
To add to the confusion—when the women went to the tomb early in the morning
it was open... the stone was rolled back

I'm going to read the story from the Gospel of John—John 20:1-18
“the other disciple” is John—the author of this particular gospel
For ease of hearing the story, I'm going to use his name as I read it

We have 3 characters in the story... Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John...

1. Mary Magdalene—she goes to the tomb first, finds it open, but doesn't go in
She runs back to Peter and John to tell them the news
As they went back to the tomb, she must have followed at a distance
My guess—slowly, with her head down, in confusion about the open tomb
Assuming that the body was stolen—what else could it be???
 2. Peter—He races John to the tomb, but loses the race
John doesn't go in—he looks from the doorway
Not Peter—as soon as he gets there, he bolts inside
He sees the linen cloths lying there, with the head cloth lying separate
 3. John—He's the one who figured it out first
After Peter went inside the tomb, John followed
As soon as he saw the empty grave clothes, he “believed”—but didn't understand
Then both Peter and John went back home
1. Mary Magdalene has arrived by now—apparently, she didn't see Peter and John leave
She assumes that Jesus' body has been taken away
When she looks inside the tomb there are 2 angels, dressed in white
But she doesn't seem to realize they are angels
When asked why she's crying she says they took Jesus away
All she wants is to care for his body
Her grief is so overpowering she doesn't recognize the answers
She doesn't even recognize Jesus when he speaks to her

It isn't until Jesus calls her by name that she knows him
Immediately she turns and worships Jesus—Rabbouni! Teacher!

Interesting that in the responses of these 3 we find our own responses to life—in fact I've had all of them
As something difficult happens—we often find ourselves in a chaotic place
Nothing worked out the way we had hoped
Not only is there great loss of love—but of dreams and future
It's over...

1. We only see what we expect to see
Mary is just looking for Jesus' dead body
Anything else is not even in her realm of consciousness—she cannot see it
2. Even in the presence of a miracle we don't see it
The presence of angels or of Jesus don't register
Mary only sees them as people who can tell her where the body is located
3. Like Peter, we race to confront what is happening
Nothing holds us back from rushing in to the place others hang back from
But we're stunned by what we encounter—not knowing what to do or how to respond
We just stand there—lost—it doesn't make sense
4. Or, like John, we believe—OK, this is God—not my imagination
But we don't know how to live in the truth of it—we don't really understand what's happening
We just go home—believing, but we don't know how to incorporate it into life
It stays in the head—as a mysterious visit from God—now what?!
5. Jesus persists in coming to us—calling us by name, getting our attention—until we look him in the eye
Jesus is here—alive, present in my life/situation/grief/problem
And he's not over at the side looking on
Jesus is alive—Jesus is present to me—Jesus comes all the way to us!

The Truth of the Resurrection is that Jesus is alive—he didn't just live to die again later—Jesus still lives!
Jesus is alive **today—in 2019**
Jesus is alive to me! ...and Jesus is alive to you!

Jesus has trumped evil, so it need never control us again
In the crucifixion, Jesus submitted to evil and the political authorities
He didn't run or escape, and he persisted in actions that were unsafe
Because of it, they killed him!
But evil didn't have the last word—death couldn't hold him
Jesus couldn't stay dead! He rose from the grave—fully alive!
And in rising—he trumped evil!
Never again will evil and sin have the last word—Jesus proved stronger!
Because Jesus lives, we live in Jesus' resurrection power!!

Jesus is always with me and present in every life situation
Jesus will always come all the way to me and show himself
He does it again and again and again—until I'm ready to see

Later Jesus comes to Peter, John and the others
Even to Thomas who doubts it's possible and demands proof
Jesus comes to Thomas and shows him in a way he can believe
Jesus does the same for us—we don't get a lecture to get with the program
Jesus comes to us and shows us himself in a way we can believe
Jesus will come all the way to each one of us and be present to us