

Scripture Readings

With a dramatic monologue based on the Easter Story as told in Luke's Gospel

First Reading: Easter Returns – Luke 23:55 – 24:3

⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

¹But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body.

Reflection: *I witness*

It's funny looking back.

We were so worried about that stone,
who would move it for us so we could get into the tomb.

There were only a few of us that morning.

I just forget who was there besides Mary and Joanna and me.

But we didn't think a few women could move the boulder on our own.

Isn't that the way, though?

You get so focused on the problem you *expect*,

spend all your worry on that one thing –

and then it's something completely different that changes your day –
changes your life!

The tomb was already open when we got there –
like a mouth in the rock shouting at us.

But we couldn't hear its joy.

We were so fixed on what we expected to do.

We wanted to honour Jesus.

Honour his body after all he'd been through.

But isn't that the way, though?

You have a plan.

You know how things *ought* to happen.

And then God turns your world upside down.

At that moment,

when we couldn't find the body,

we didn't know what was going on.

Didn't have a clue.

I was a witness.

I was there.

We looked and looked,

and all we could see was an empty stone ledge.

Unison Prayer

God of mystery, we have made it here on Easter morning, seeking to find you.
We *know* the Easter story yet we do not always *understand* what is happening.
Open our hearts to be surprised, just as the women were when they found the tomb empty. Amen.

Second Reading: Perplexed and dazzled – Luke 24.3-5

³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The 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.

Reflection continues: *I witness*

We were perplexed, all right.
We had been there
when they handed Jesus over to the soldiers.
He could barely walk by his own strength.
And we were there while he was hanging on that cross.
We saw him die;
we heard him die.
We watched as they took his body down.
We followed Joseph to the tomb.
We were there, all of us women.
I was a witness.
We were there.
After the Sabbath, we were ready.
We had the spices;
we had it all worked out.
But we weren't counting on angels.
I ask you,
do you expect an angel, dazzling in your eyes
on the saddest day of your life?
They were so bright, we threw ourselves on the ground in front of them.
But those angels,
they sounded as if we should have known better!
“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”
Well, Angel, were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Did you see him suffer?
Did you hear him breathe his last desperate breath?
I was a witness.
I was there.
My heart was broken on Friday.
And you don't get over a broken heart in a couple of days!

But then hindsight is so much clearer, isn't it?
When I look back now,
after all these years,
I can see how God was at work.
In Jesus.
In our very midst.
All those years.
But face to face with that angel, I didn't know what to say.
Still, my heart started to beat a little faster.
Jesus definitely was not there.
But I was.
I was a witness.
And he was not there.

Unison Prayer

God of mystery, we can understand why those women were perplexed. We know the Easter story but we do not understand *how* things happened as that day dawned. Yet your gift of hope is dazzling to us, too. We would like to believe that death is not the end. And so we sing our song in hope:

Third Reading: Remember? Luke 24.5b-11

He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

Reflection continues: *I witness*

Remember how he told you...
Remember?
Of course we remembered being with Jesus in Galilee.
We women were always there,
watching, listening, herding the children, organizing lunch.
Of course we remembered Jesus in Galilee.
How he spoke.
How he taught us that God's kingdom was like a woman baking,
flour up to her elbows, waiting for the yeast to rise.
Jesus had been watching us, listening to us, too.
I remember
how he loved the children near by, under his feet.

I remember how he loved a good meal, a good laugh.
I remember how he loved to tell a good story,
how he made me think.
I was there in Galilee.
I was a witness.
I remember when he told us that the Son of Man would be rejected and killed.
But I didn't want to hear it.
I didn't want to believe Jesus would *die*.
Not so soon.
Not in so much pain.
I remember
but I didn't want to.
Not then.

Then again, hindsight is so much clearer, isn't it?
When I look back now,
after all these years,
I can see how God was at work.
In Jesus.
In our very midst.
Right beside us all those years.
I remember his clear hope
that all God's people would come from east and west, from north and south
to eat together in God's kingdom.
I just didn't understand Jesus would have to *die*
to bring people to the table together.
To make peace between us.

Still, I remember when he was dying.
With his last breath, he said to God,
"Into your hands I commend my spirit."
I was a witness.
I was there.
And now I see he was giving his spirit to us;
putting his spirit into our hands
so that we can take his peace with us wherever we go.
To bring all God's people to the table together.
Jesus rises in us,
in his friends,
in our broken hearts.
He rises to put us back together again
so we can befriend the world,
make peace for all God's people in his name.

Hindsight is so much clearer, isn't it?
When I look back now,

I can see how God was at work.
In Jesus.
In our very midst.
And still is.
That morning,
when we remembered what we'd known all along,
we ran back to tell the others.
Jesus is risen.
And we've got work to do – in his name.
You know what those disciples said?
It's all idle chatter.
An old wives' tale.
But I know.
I was there.
I was a witness.
And as Peter found out,
Hindsight is always so much clearer!

Fourth Reading: Amazed by grace! Luke 24:12

¹²But 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.