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Easter Day

The Rev. Laurel Coote

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church

Out of the dark, into the light. Such is the journey of God's people, with God. Illumination is a sacred gift - whether expressed in the fire of the pascal candle, or the moment when we become acutely aware of what we did not know, or could even imagine. When we are graced by holy illumination, things become clearer. God's Word breaks through and brings to life God's presence and movement in time. We hear it, and we catch glimpses of understanding.

What is it that gets in the way of our seeing clearly — of really seeing and understanding? Mary, Magdalene and Johanna's ability to see was marred by their experience — the deep grief for their beloved friend and teacher. Tears made seeing impossible. Yet, in the dark of the night, where it was impossible to find their way easily to the tomb, they set out, trusting that God would guide their path.

Arriving, ready to bathe and anoint his body, the women can't believe what they see — or what they do not see. In the light of day, Jesus' body is gone. Only a shroud of linen remained, and two angels. Calling them to remember Jesus' words, all that he had told them, all that he promised. Why, the angels asked, would one seek the living among the dead?

Forced to imagine a world without Christ, the women arose out of the darkness of their grief and came: to tend to his body, to honor and to mourn him. Their experience: seeing the empty tomb, and remembering Jesus' words is insufficient — without context, without understanding, none of it makes sense. Yet, it is by Jesus, as revealed in scripture, that the pieces of the puzzle will begin to fit.

Perhaps the story of Jesus' resurrection is too incredulous for us to believe? The gap between the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ a chasm too wide? Although historical data provides evidence that Jesus did, in fact, live — evidence of his resurrection, or that after his death he ate, walked and talked with the women and his disciples could be called mere hearsay. And yet, we are called to believe. We are called to trust.

Our God, the maker of things seen and unseen, the God of the impossible who makes all things possible has broken into the world again. To doubt is human. It would take remembering Jesus' words for the women to believe. As their confusion shifted to wonder and amazement, they joyfully shared the good news. But the men didn't believe. We are so often like that: quick to disbelieve and slow to rejoice, and especially to grasp the reality of hope found in a life lived in Christ. Grief and despair can cause us to forget things we knew.

It can be tempting to believe only what one can see, or can be proven. It would take Peter setting his own eyes upon the linen shroud left behind in the tomb, before he could dare to suspend his disbelief, and to allow himself to wallow in amazement.

What we have, what we can cling to are the witnesses and their testimonies about Jesus. We have the stories of those who believed in their hearts what they had seen, and who risked their own lives that it might be shared. There is something compelling about someone who believes so passionately. It stirs something within us. We are drawn in, curious and hopeful, invited to suspend our doubt and disbelief so that we might, for a moment (or for a lifetime) imagine God's impossible possibility a reality. If our hearts and minds can be illuminated in such a profound way, we may find that we begin to see, know and understand in new ways. Holding Jesus' resurrection as possible thrusts open the door for what else could be. It invites the question: What does God want me to know today? What does God wish for me to see, and to believe?

Beyond what we can imagine, God is at work in the world and in our lives. WE are wise to remember that beyond the tangible; what we can know and see, lies that which we cannot know or see. There is a whole world of Holy Mystery that we cannot see, but which, if we open our hearts to God may be made known to us. God moves us with the story and words of the women at the tomb. God surprises us with the proclamation of the angels that Christ had Risen; God reflects to us our humanity as people who disbelieve and doubt, and whose lives can be transformed amazement. And, God gives us a glimpse of who we might become when we witness Peter's bold proclamation of what he has always known in his heart, from the beginning.

That Jesus Christ is Lord, and that the Lord has risen indeed, Alleluia!