

## A Sermon for Easter Day

Our Easter Gospel begins “early on the first day of the week”, in the darkness before dawn. In the quiet of that hour Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb and sees it in disarray. The stone has been rolled away. Immediately she would have been wondering what had happened, who had done this, and why.

Understandably concerned about what has happened to Jesus’ body, she goes and seeks help from Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple. She reports what she saw, and the three of them make their way back to the tomb. Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple set off at a sprint.

When they arrive, the Beloved Disciple bends to look into the tomb and sees the discarded linen wrappings. He stays outside, but Simon Peter is bold enough to step into the tomb to see more thoroughly. They confirm that the body is gone, but they do not yet fully understand precisely what has happened. They then return to their homes, most likely feeling disturbed and distressed, and wondering what will happen next.

But Mary does not leave. She stays. She mourns and weeps. She weeps for the death of Jesus, and for the taking away of his body. His disciples, friends and loved ones have been seemingly robbed of the opportunity to give him the dignified burial that he deserves. No wonder she wept.

But then, as she bends down to look into the tomb once more, she sees the angels. She speaks with them, and explains her distress: ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’

Then she turns around and sees someone standing there. She cannot yet tell that it is Jesus. For the second time, she is asked: ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’

Politely, thinking him to be the gardener, she asks if he knows where the body is and says she will take it away. It is only when Jesus uses her name that she realises who he is, and she joyfully calls him ‘Rabbouni’, ‘Teacher’. I imagine this was immediately followed by an embrace. Who wouldn’t want to hug the beloved person they thought was dead and gone, and is somehow standing before them, alive and speaking with them!

Jesus then gives her a deeply important task. She is to go to the disciples and deliver the news of the resurrection. With the words “I have seen the Lord” she proclaims that Jesus is risen, and that he will ascend to the Father.

We are the inheritors of her message, countless generations later. We are Easter people, who proclaim their faith in the risen Christ. We look to him as our guide and teacher still – he remains our *Rabbouni*, and we continue to learn from him those lessons of compassion, love and empathy that were the hallmarks of his parables and which underpinned his actions and encounters with all.

We also see his rising from the tomb as a sign of our reconciliation with God. We are flawed, imperfect beings, but Christ's death brings us back to God and we find ourselves to be beloved sons and daughters, who are welcome, and the recipients of unimaginable grace, mercy and forgiveness. The joy of the reunion between Mary and Jesus in that garden is a tiny glimpse of the joyful reunion between our very selves and God.

Thanks be to God for the events of Easter, and the hope that it gives us this day and every day. May we enter this season of Eastertide uplifted and sustained by that hope, may we allow it to guide us, and may we joyfully celebrate today, and every day.

While we celebrate the good news of the resurrection today, and proclaim it through our Easter liturgy, this is truly something which goes beyond a single day or even a season. In his poem for Easter Day, John Keble depicted Easter as a feast day which colours the entire Christian year. As he reflected on Easter Day, he said: "Thou art this Sun of other days, they shine by giving back thy rays" and in the following verse, he wrote:

*Enthroned in thy sovereign sphere,  
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year;  
Sundays by thee more glorious break,  
An Easter Day in every week.*

I wish you, and those dear to you, a very blessed and joyful Easter. May the good news of the resurrection fill your heart and spirit with faith, love and hope. May you carry that faith, love and hope into tomorrow, into next week, and long into the future.

Rev. Dr Emily Fraser  
All Saints, South Hobart, and St Raphael's, Fern Tree  
Easter Day 2025  
20 April 2025