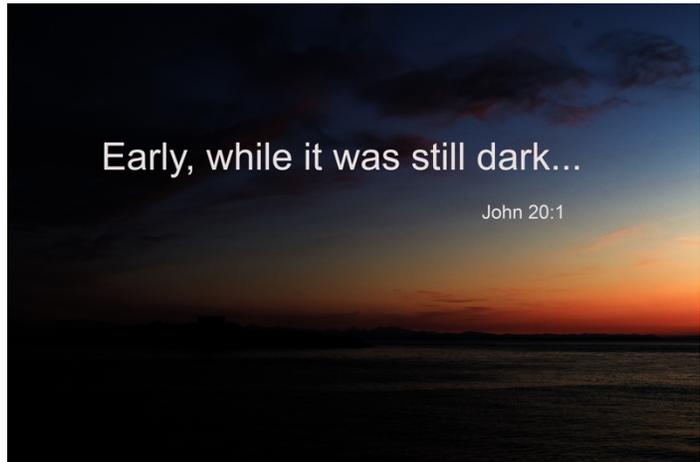


A reflection for Easter morning...

Mary goes to the tomb early, while it's still dark... she weeps to see that the grave stone is gone, as she concludes someone has taken Jesus' body away. Not only is Jesus dead, but his body is gone. And then in her grief, amidst her tears, in the darkness, Jesus stands with her. He stands with her in her tears and in the dark.

It is this portion of the gospel reading that I am struck by this morning:



*Verse 11 - Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping?**" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ **Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"** Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).*

Why are you weeping?

I don't hear that as a rebuke, but rather a question that invites reflection on just what is the heart of the matter, what and who has been lost? What are your tears saying? Her tears are the expression of the anguish and sorrow of death and loss in grief. Mary has good reason to weep. And so do we. There is so much that is wrong, and so much that hurts in our world. And especially right now when the whole world is frightened, and uncertain and we are grieving, weeping together. Weeping at the freedoms we've lost. Aching in the separations the pandemic has forced on us, a separation that brings to the very surface of our awareness just how alone we are, and alone we feel. So much we have lost. What lies ahead for us?

Death is the ultimate separation, the ultimate loss. Death faces us with our utter helplessness— it is our undoing. We are completely without answer or ability in

the face of death. No wonder we weep. And no wonder Mary is weeping. But— it is right there that Jesus meets her. In the dark, and in her tears.

She cannot fully comprehend— but she sees he is alive!

While it was still dark and while we are still weeping... This is surely where Jesus meets us this morning. Right here. Right where we are.

Though we would lovely to be listening together to triumphant strains, our hearts fairly bursting with the loveliness of the sound of our voices blended as we are singing together, it is right here in our aloneness, our isolation, our helplessness, fear, grief and dismay that Jesus himself meets us.

He *is* risen! And everything *is* changed.

The new creation *has* begun, and our Lord Jesus *is* with us!

But even while we celebrating, albeit quietly, the resurrection of our Jesus Christ, there is a question that presses in on me. As I think about the utter dismay of ***the disciples who didn't know what to think, or what had happened for they didn't yet understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead (Jn 20. 9)*** the question is this: will you trust me [Jesus] in the dark, in the midst of life-as-it-is, in the place you don't understand, can't see the road ahead, and don't know all the answers?

Dear friends, Jesus Christ is risen! Let us hear this good news, but let us hear it where we are, right where we are, in the reality of our circumstances. May His risen life breathe new life into our very core, so that we may live to the praise of his glory. Amen!

"If the church speaks about it [resurrection] aright, it does so with startled humility, to which the entrusted revelation that it must proclaim, however old and familiar, will always be new, and just as transcendent and inconceivable as it was the first day. And if the world hears the term aright, it will do so with the joy of discovery or with a sharp protest, as at something unheard of."-Karl Barth

