

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...things happen early in the morning. Mornings are mystical and sacred, the earth rises from its slumber to greet the coming day, but this morning did not feel mystical, this morning did not feel sacred. Mary Magdalene did not want to get out of bed but the orange glow in the east was spreading across the sky. The day's doings were calling.

Sitting on her bed Mary said the customary, traditional Jewish first prayer of the day – the Modeh Ani; “Blessed are you Lord God, Ruler of the Universe. I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great.” But the words didn't offer the usual comfort. This morning the words were just words.

The last few days seemed a blur. The Passover meal, with its prayers and rituals, family and friends gathered to recite the ancient story, seemed so long ago. Jesus' strange words that night as he handed the bread, “Do this in remembrance of me”, now made eerie sense. She didn't really think it would happen. But he was gone. They had come for him. Right there in the garden. The garden where they went to pray, to talk with Jesus. The garden that held so many memories, so many stories. Then he was gone.

She had followed the next day, in disbelief with the other women, as he made the slow agonizing walk to his death. Mary had stood there numb and in shock as he breathed his last. She had comforted his mother. The words didn't come. The words couldn't come. All she could do was hold on to his mother. She followed to the garden as they laid him in the tomb. He was dead. It was finished.

But the burial rites needed to be done. Sabbath meant they couldn't do the customary anointing. But today, early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, she had a job to do. Mary dressed as if in a dream. This was not happening. She made her way down the street and made the slow procession to the garden, to the tomb. How was she going to move the stone?

But...The stone had been rolled away! It was empty! How could this be? What have they done? They have taken him. One final insult from the people who had robbed her of her friend, her teacher, her Rabbouni. They must have taken his body to deny him the proper burial. The stone was rolled away.

Then the flood of tears came. They have taken him. Weeping in the garden, the place with the stone rolled away someone was sitting there. “Why are you weeping?”

“Don't you understand? They have taken him!” She exclaimed.

A voice from behind her: “Woman! Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” That voice. It sounded familiar, but it couldn't be. “They have taken him! Do you know where?”

“Mary!”

“Rabbouni?!”

That voice. The familiar voice of the impossible. How can this be? This is not possible. “Destroy this temple and in three days it will be rebuilt,” echoed in her head. Could it be? He's alive? He's alive! Jesus is risen! “Go Mary. Tell the others.” New tears as she ran to tell the good news. “I have seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!”

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, things happen.

Early on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene expected to find death but instead she found new life. We have stood in Mary Magdalene's shoes. We know only too well what it means to expect death but find new life. We know what it feels like to follow on Good Friday only to be confronted with Easter Day. We have stood there peering into the empty tomb with the stone rolled away experiencing the impossible. The thing is, we don't go looking for resurrection – resurrection finds us.

Jesus' resurrection is about God loving us so much that God is willing to go to any length to find us in all the wrong places. Because like Mary, we go looking for God in the familiar, in the places we expect to find God. But in Jesus' resurrection God finds us when we are down and out, when we are at the end of our rope, when all hope seems lost. God rolls back the stones that bind and confine us. God stands waiting with a familiar voice to call us to new life. Call us to "Go and tell."

Resurrection has no meaning, no purpose, no place unless like Mary Magdalene we go and tell it! Resurrection has no meaning if we cannot share the Good News of Easter to a world living in Good Friday! Resurrection has no meaning unless we are willing to live as Easter people.

Go and tell of your life transformed by the one who healed the sick and cured the lame.

Go and tell of the one who blessed the broken and welcomed the outcast.

Go and tell that "Do this in remembrance of me" is real.

Go and tell that God has work for us to do in our neighborhoods and street corners.

In truth resurrection isn't an event it is an experience. We are called to go and tell not only with our lips but also with our lives. Go and tell of the resurrection power of God's love and hope.

Clarence Jordan, you may not have heard of him but he was born in 1912 in Georgia. Raised in the Southern Baptist tradition in a time of racial inequality he eventually began a movement called Koinonia Farms," named after the Greek word for "fellowship or communion." He sought to unite his twin passion for agriculture and scripture with his commitment to radical Christian discipleship. It was this movement which eventually birthed Habitat for Humanity International. It was Clarence Jordan who once said: **"The proof that God raised Jesus from the dead is not the empty tomb, but the full hearts of his transformed disciples. The crowning evidence that he lives is not a vacant grave, but a spirit-filled fellowship. Not a rolled-away stone, but a carried-away church."**

We need to practice being the carried away church practicing resurrection in a world clinging to Good Friday!

This Easter, may you open your whole self — heart, soul, mind, and strength — to God's inspiring call to new life and renewed love. May you feel God luring you, prompting you, goading you, cajoling you, calling you and encouraging you — each day and in each new present moment — to practice resurrection. Because, "The Lord is risen. The Lord is risen indeed." Alleluia! Amen.