

“Leading Seekers - 2”

April 20, 2025
New Hope - York Pines UC
Rev. Padre Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

Living God, by your Holy Spirit, open our eyes to see the new light of this day; open our lips to tell of the empty tomb; open our hearts to believe the good news; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Readings:

Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The 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. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to the hands of sinners and be crucified and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But 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.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

<Children's Time> - Mary's Monologue¹

I am so excited to tell my story, I can't wait. I've just come from the tomb – I am still a bit out of breath! Friday night, I was so sad that Jesus had died. I couldn't sleep, and I just wanted to be near him. Have you experienced that kind of sadness before? My grief was so painful. My heart felt so heavy in my chest that I thought it might bring me a little comfort to be close to him, even in death.

So I ran right on Sunday early morning. When I got to the tomb, I was shocked to find the stone had been moved away from the entrance! And I was perplexed! Who would do such a terrible thing?

To desecrate a grave is a terrible crime, and so I ran back to the house to wake Peter and let him know what had happened. He and James took off running to witness it for themselves. I was already out of breath, so it took me a bit to catch up to them. And when I got back to the tomb, both of them were inside, with only the grave cloths that we had wrapped Jesus in, lying neatly in a pile - and no Jesus anywhere! His body had been stolen! Who would do such an awful thing?

Peter and James left to tell the others, but I was so overwhelmed. I just couldn't stop crying and yelling! I was both devastated and angry at the same time! Have you ever had so many feelings all at once that they got all jumbled up inside you?

I was pacing around the entrance to the tomb, cursing whoever had done this, until finally my grief won and I fell to my knees in front of the

¹ Cathy Gradante, Bridgenorth U.C.

empty tomb and just sobbed my heart out! I didn't think I had any tears to shed after the horror of Friday, but fresh tears poured down my face in unimaginable sorrow.

And when I finally opened my eyes and looked inside the tomb, it was no longer empty. Two men were there. I blinked away the tears and wiped my face because I couldn't believe my eyes! How had they gotten past me? How could I have not seen or heard them coming in? And then they asked me, "Why are you crying?" And so I explained what had happened. "They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him." And then another man came up behind me and asked the same question. "Women, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

I had no idea who he was, but I thought maybe he had moved the body or had seen who had done it, and so I asked him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." And then he spoke my name – "Mary" – and I knew! My heart knew. It was Jesus! It was really him! My Lord was alive! Alive! "Teacher!" I exclaimed. And I reached out my arms to hug him with the joy of reunion. You do when you are so incredibly happy to see someone? Don't you?

But he told me not to touch him because he hadn't yet ascended to God. I am not sure what he meant by that, but he told me to go and tell the others the Good News! And so I took off running! This time with joy instead of fear! But I glanced back one more time, just to make sure he was still there. I still can't quite wrap my mind around it. But it's true! I have seen him with my own eyes and felt it in the depths of my heart. Jesus is alive!

I am glad, so glad you decided to get up early this Easter morning to receive my story for yourself. I hope it fills you with hope, joy, and wonder at the depth of God's love for us all because there is truly no greater gift than what God has done today for us! I hope you share my story. This Good News is just too wonderful not to share! Oh, what a morning this is turning out to be!

<Reflection>

Happy Easter, everyone! Today, we celebrate the most holy and mysterious event in Christianity: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God entered into human history, and humans bore witness to His death on the cross. We will explore this mystery further during our upcoming "Home Coming Day," using a secular and scientific lens. But today, on this Resurrection Sunday, I want to express the joy, awe, and praise that Christians have lifted for generations. And I want to do so by sharing a powerful story of leadership, women's leadership, at the very heart of the resurrection story.

According to the Gospel of Luke, it says:

"On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb." Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, disciples in their own right, set out to visit Jesus' tomb. But let's consider the timing. Jesus was crucified on Friday, before the start of the Sabbath. Jewish law prohibited work on the Sabbath, so the burial was rushed. Then, as soon as the Sabbath ended and the first light of Sunday dawned, these women prepared spices and returned to honour His body.

Now remember, Jesus' crucifixion had been a public and political execution. His death drew the attention of both the crowds and the Roman

authorities. So much so that Pontius Pilate ordered soldiers to guard the tomb.

Imagine walking up to a fenced military base today, one with signs that read: "KEEP OUT: Property of the Canadian Armed Forces. Trespassing is illegal and punishable by law." Would you dare go near it?

The tomb must have felt just as intimidating, if not more. But these women, these brave, grieving women, pressed forward anyway. Yes, they may have felt fear, but their love for Jesus was greater than their fear of Roman power. Their devotion gave them courage. Though they weren't prepared to challenge the Roman authorities directly, they courageously stepped into danger.

They were the first to witness the empty tomb. They were the first to hear the message of resurrection. And they became the first to carry that good news. Their faithfulness opened the eyes of the male disciples, whose grief had paralyzed them. These women became leaders in the most devastating moment—the moment they thought they had lost their Saviour.

Because of their courage, the resurrection was not only witnessed, it was proclaimed.

Because of their leadership, others followed. Their devotion reminds us that women were at the very heart of Jesus' ministry, from His public life, to His crucifixion, to the first light of resurrection.

Sisters, brothers, friends! Like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, let us be intentional and courageous in our faith. Let us prepare our hearts, take risks in love, and step forward with compassion and courage. Let us inspire each other, support each other, and lead each other into the living

ministry of Jesus—in our homes, in our friendships, and in our communities. Through that, we too become witnesses to the resurrection, carriers of hope, and builders of the Kingdom of God. May it be so. Amen.