

St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Easter Sunday, March 31 2024  
Sermon by The Rev. Karen Joy Kelly  
Acts 10.31-43; Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15.1-11; John 20.1-18

### Last Sunday during the reading of the Passion

I was profoundly touched by the act Jesus being wrapped in linen cloth and laid in the tomb. For some reason, known only to the Holy Spirit, I was moved back to Christmas eve when our gospel spoke to us about Jesus being wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger. I don't know what that means and while spending much time this week pondering the connection it still has not manifested itself to me. Yet it has stuck with me. And I know that, in due time, the Spirit will make me aware of its significance.

This morning we read that the two disciples whom Mary alerted the two disciples that Jesus' body had been removed from the tomb. Peter noticed that the linens remained and, separately the cloth that was on Jesus' head had been rolled up and set aside in a place by itself.

While not yet understanding what was happening, they left the tomb and returned to their homes.

Can you imagine?

For three years they had followed this amazing rabbi, teacher, as he moved through the entire region, healing, reviving, preaching, teaching and urging all who encountered himself to a new way of life. A way of life and love that they had not witnessed before he came among the.

They had given Jesus their lives. Left their families to follow hem wherever he led them. they experienced all of the mystery and the majesty of his presence and, then, in the blink of an eye, the one they had hung all of their hopes and dreams on was taken from them. The one who was borne in lowly estate and died the worst possible death one could imagine, the one who loved them beyond all imagination was gone. Not only was he crucified, his body, his physical being had been taken from them. Gone.

Three years of their lives. All their hopes and dreams and visions of a better way of being dashed.

Most of us have never experienced atrocities and suffering such as that which these men experienced. But, among us, those who have experienced combat have. And we know the impact that leaves on one.

What does one do when lives are shattered? They return to their homes in hopes of recalibrating their lives in order to get back to the life they knew before encountering Jesus.

Just imagine. While we are here this Easter morn, celebrating and shouting alleluia for the first time since before Ash Wednesday. They were totally devastated because they still did not understand what was happening. We have the benefit of knowing the rest of that narrative. They didn't.

Yet, Mary stayed.

And Mary saw two angels.

And then, she saw Jesus. She saw Jesus. As she saw him, the eyes of her humanity assumed him to be the gardener.

And then he spoke.

He called her by name.

And her world was changed forever. Recognizing the risen Jesus, she immediately found the other disciples and shared the word, sparing no details!

I have seen the Lord!

And, Jesus, in his altered state changed all of our worlds forever. So powerful that here we are on Easter morn, some 2000 plus years later worshiping and celebrating this Lord Jesus as we too proclaim "I have seen the Lord". Yet, we proclaim it, perhaps not as directly as that but as we shout "Alleluia, Christ is risen" "He has risen indeed!" Alleluia!

Today we join with all the saints, martyrs and all who have gone before us in this acclimation of faith in the one who has given us new life and life hereafter.

I have seen the Lord!

My question to you this morning as we are filled with God's glory is, have you seen the Lord? Have you seen him all around you? Or anywhere?

Have you experienced his eternal and abundant and extravagant love in your life?

Have you seen him in the eyes of the person sitting next to you this morning? In the one standing in front of you in the grocery line or in the car next to you at a stop light? Have you seen him in the person who is the total opposite of you? In those who differ from you politically? Have you seen him in a homeless person? An immigrant seeking desperately to start a new life?

Have you seen him in the emergency room or in your community as abundant love is poured out by many in their actions as they humbly serve persons in need?

Have you seen him outside the confines of this beautiful church? In your home? In your place of employment? In the trees, our beautiful Lake Michigan or a sunrise or sunset? Or even in a smile from a stranger?

He's there. He's all around us and the beauty of his life, death and resurrection are present. Know that he is there ... to be seen ... for which to be grateful ... and out of that gratitude ... we are called to become like him. We are called to be his hands, feet, heart and soul in this hurting world. Where you see his absence is where you are called to step in and follow your heart to show him to others. To become the one who can, with all assurance say that you, too, have seen the Lord ... perhaps not through the lenses of our human eyes, but simply see his presence as the Holy Spirit allows you to see the good around you taking place.

Very simply, we are called this morning to not simply worship Jesus, but with grateful hearts follow him; be like him as he cared for others as we leave this beautiful sanctuary this morning.

And when that happens, you will have truly seen the Lord!

In the name of the risen Christ who resurrects in us each day new life and new possibilities. Amen.