



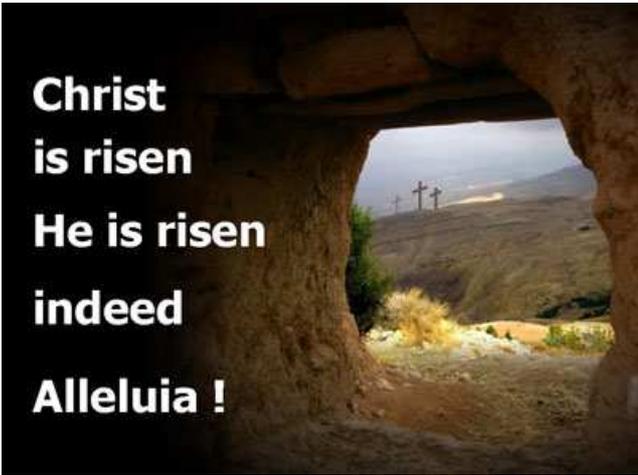
Alleluia! Christ is risen --
He is risen indeed Alleluia !

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Gospel Reading John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 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. 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.' When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.



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Commentary

The Bible reading today tells of Mary finding the empty tomb. This is not necessarily good news! Mary must have been devastated to see the empty tomb, and suspected grave robbers. We know that this kind of thing took place at the time and there was a death penalty for those caught.

Mary then runs to tell Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, commonly thought to be John. Mary goes to Peter, in part, because he is a leader of the disciples, also Peter and the beloved disciple remained in the vicinity rather than fleeing with the other disciples. The presence of these two men at the tomb will be important, because it establishes two legal witnesses to the empty tomb.

As a woman, Mary has no legal standing as a witness. This is an interesting detail in itself, Jesus will feel able to ignore this traditional understanding of the role of a woman and use Mary as the first Apostle and important witness. Make certain, the involvement of a woman is not something that the early church would have invented, not if they wanted the resurrection to be taken seriously!

Meditation

John Bunyan was imprisoned in the 17th century for refusing to sign a document affirming the Anglican statement of faith. While in prison, he wrote the classic allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress." Many of us think that the journey of faith is only about getting to the point where Christ converts your soul and raises you from the death of unbelief. Bunyan knew what all Christians eventually learn, though, that despair and discouragement are graves that Christians must be delivered from, too. In one beautiful passage, Christian and his travelling companion Hopeful are awaiting certain death in Doubting Castle. They are praying through the night when all at once Christian sees the Easter light break forth in his heart: "What a fool am I thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty. I have a key in my bosom called Promise that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." And so it did for Christian and Hopeful as they escape the grave of despair by the key of the risen Christ. Whatever discouragement you may face, Easter is God's promise to you of his resurrected power.
