

The First Day of the Rest of the World

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John 20:1-18

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the Earth, the Earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the breath of God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Genesis 1:1-3)¹

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.²

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

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.”

¹ All passages cited here are NRSV.

² Italicized texts are from John 20:1-18.

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise. (Isaiah 43:18-21)

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward 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.

...The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we

know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, creation is new: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Corinthians 5:14-17)

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it or the cry of distress. (Isaiah 65:17-19)

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.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. God will

dwell with them; they will be God's peoples, and God will be with them; God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:1-5a)

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?"

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to God's holy name. God's anger is but for a moment; God's favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. (Psalm 30:4-5)

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him a way, 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).

Today is the first day of the rest of the world. Death has been swallowed up by life. Decay is destroyed by resurrection. Christ has triumphed over the powers of evil. Creation is born again! Everything is new! The new covenant that Jesus promised has its fulfillment in his death and resurrection. All that he taught, all that he did and all that he calls us to do is confirmed in this unfolding of new life. Just as spring has turned the trees pink and white, just as morning makes all

things visible again, just as we wake up from a deep sleep, so now creation greets its new day.

Jesus taught us the hallmarks of this new creation. We are called to be citizens of God's realm. We are the ambassadors of God's justice and peace. We preach good news to the poor, release for the captives, recovery of sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed, and we proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19). And we cannot claim to be followers of Christ if we do not follow him into the messy parts of the world both looking for signs of the new creation and bringing it along with us. With no apologies whatsoever to a certain Mr. Beck, that means we must ask why the poor are poor and work to change systems that keep them poor. Can "freedom for the oppressed" be understood in any way that is not political? This is our call in the resurrection world — to shine new light where there is shadow.

And so this is the morning of new life. This is the day of the new song. Because even though we die, with Christ we rise. Even though the world decays, Christ makes it new. Even when all may seem lost, Christ has won the victory already. This is our hope, this is our call and this is the new world in which we live.