

“Jesus Is Who You Are Looking For”

John 1:5, 11:25, 20:1-18a, Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 1:23, 28:5-10

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There is a scene in C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* in which a ship gets caught in a strange dark mist at sea. The sailors cannot see a thing, and they cannot find their way back to the light. "We shall never get out," moan the rowers. "We are going round and round in circles. We shall never get out." At some point all of us experience this feeling. The entire world is fumbling in the dark, uncertain of the right course, going round and round in circles.

Pastor Angela Hancock wrote. "While it was still dark Mary came to the tomb looking for a dead man. We can hardly blame her for that. What else could she expect? Mary's world was as full of darkness as ours is now. If Mary didn't believe the world was messed up before, she certainly believed it when her teacher was arrested, scourged, mocked, crucified, and buried. She certainly believed it the day she showed up to find the stone rolled away. Some jerk had taken the body! What else could you expect from a rotten world like this one? So, she doesn't even ask the two disciples what they saw when they looked into the tomb. She doesn't welcome angels with good news to tell. She doesn't know Jesus when he is standing right in front of her. Could that be the problem we face on Easter? The problem with being a citizen of a dark world? We don't expect much. We can live with a dead Messiah and cling to the idea that this day is really about springtime and the way seeds die and blossom again. It's a good day to go to church, eat Easter supper, and enjoy the tradition of it all. Do we really expect anything to come out of it? Do we expect anything to change? If we went out and saw Jesus standing in the flowerbed, we'd probably think he was the gardener too! We've been going around and around in circles in the darkness for so long. Will we know the way out even when it's standing right in front of us? That's a good question for us to ask on Easter Sunday. Or maybe that is the wrong way to go about it. The promise of the gospel is not that we can see Jesus here in the dark, but that Jesus can see us. That makes all the difference."

The gospel of John proclaims that Easter begins in the dark. **John 20:1a NRSV** "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,"

Pastor Kathy Donley wrote. "Mary has been up all night, wrestling with the dark, unable to sleep because of her grief and shock. Jesus her friend, her beloved teacher, is dead. It's still not real to her. Yet over and over, all through the night, she has replayed it in her mind, the cruelty, the violence, the anguish of his mother and the other women, his cry from the cross, the senselessness of it all. She is furious. What could she have done to prevent it? Why didn't Jesus protect himself? Why had he been so determined to come to Jerusalem? She repeats the questions and hears no answers. She beats her pillow and screams her sorrow into it, hoping for the release of sleep, but it never comes. Jesus is dead. She cannot change that fact. She will never heal from that pain.

Finally she cannot stay inside a moment longer. She must do something to drive some of the thoughts from her head. So, in the dark, she goes to the tomb. It is an act of desperation. It is an act of courage. It is the act of a woman in grief, wanting to tend the body of one she loved, wanting to soothe and heal the wounds on that body."

We live in a dark world, going round and round afraid that we will never get out. As time passes pieces of us die, some of our hopes die, some relationships die causing us to go round and round in the dark.

John 20:1-16 “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 toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. John 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. Peter 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 Jesus 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? Whom are you looking for?” 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).”

In your darkness, Jesus is asking you. “Who are you looking for?” We worship a big God, so big that Jesus is the exact person you need him to be at every moment of your life. Jesus knows exactly what we need. Our journey from the dark to the light often begins when we can verbalize what we need, to tell Jesus which Jesus we are looking for.

Mary was looking for Jesus the teacher. The loving compassionate Jesus the teacher who will teach her how to journey from grief to joy, from death to life, teach her how to hope, dream and dance again, teach her how to sleep and be at peace, teach her how to stop fumbling going round and round in the dark to following Jesus the way, the truth, the light, and the life. Mary needs Jesus to teach her how to forgive those who crucified Jesus, to teach her how to let go of the pain and frustration, to let go of the what if questions, to let go of the guilt that she did not do enough to prevent the crucifixion, to let go of her regret that she did not say I love you to Jesus enough, or give him another hug, or serve him better. Mary needs Jesus the teacher to teach her how to bring resurrection, life, and light to those around her.

John needs Jesus the loving affirmer. John keeps hearing Jesus affirm him; you can read it throughout his gospel, referring to himself as the beloved disciple, the one whom Jesus loves. John is analytical, always thinking, craving affirmation of his worth. In John's resurrection account of all the details he could have shared he writes that, he outran Peter. John needed affirmation that he was fit, taking good care of himself, needed and precious to God. John needed affirmation, time and space to be alone to process the resurrection, to process all the ways God's light is dispersing the darkness.

Mark needs Jesus the calm, assuring, loving parent. Mark is the ADHD disciple always immediately off to the next thing, needing Jesus to help him focus. Mark is vulnerable and

afraid. Mark mentions in his gospel how in a panic he left home with just a loin cloth. When they arrested Jesus, they tried to grab him but only got the loin cloth, so he ran away naked. Mark needs Jesus to help him face and solve his problems, to help him feel secure, safe and clothed.

Peter needs Jesus the forgiving, empowering, loving messiah. Peter needs Jesus forgiveness of his denials, to cleanse him of the regret that is overwhelming him. Peter needs Jesus to believe in him, to encourage him, to build the church upon him. Peter needs Jesus the Messiah to be grand powerful and amazing.

Thomas needs Jesus the loving scientist. Thomas needs Jesus to show him the resurrection, to let him analyze Jesus resurrected body, to touch Jesus, to see the resurrected Jesus eat fish, to show him resurrection in his own life, to demonstrate that resurrection will be duplicated, proven again and again, steadfast and sure. Thomas needs Jesus to give specific step by step instructions. Thomas interrupts Jesus description of heaven asking, "How do we get there?" Jesus assures Thomas that he will resurrect each of us and carry us to heaven.

Read the gospels and you will find that Jesus is different for each person he encounters. Jesus is exactly who each person needs. Often Jesus asks some form of the "Who are you looking for?" question. In every case Jesus always lovingly gives each person exactly what they need. Sometimes what is needed is tough love such as challenging the Pharisees, turning over money changers' tables. Jesus gave precisely what is needed to guide each of them from the dark to the light.

Who are you looking for? Which Jesus do you need today? What darkness do you need to have dispersed by Jesus the light of the world? Jesus is always exactly who we need him to be. Jesus always provides everything we need at the optimal moment. Jesus is always with us. Jesus always goes before us.

Matthew 28:5-10 NRSV "But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. Jesus is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'Jesus has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to Jesus, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Jesus promises to be with us everywhere. Jesus is named, **Matthew 1:23 "Emmanuel which means God with us."** Jesus is our light. No darkness, no hate, fear, greed, selfishness, nothing can ever overcome the light. Not even the darkness of death can overcome the life of the light. **John 1:5 NLT "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish the Light."**

Whatever your darkness, the resurrection absolutely, completely, totally, emphatically, definitively declares that your darkness will be illumined, that death is never final. You will rise to enjoy the glory of heaven for eternity. Light, resurrection, eternal life will always be our future.

Sometimes when someone we love dies, or a dream dies, or a relationship dies we focus on the past. We remember the good times, we struggle with our regrets. We wish that we could have handled certain situations differently. Resurrection invites us to realize the future, reunion with all we love for eternity, every dream realized and savored forever, every relationship

renewed for infinity. Gregory Nazianzen said, "In Christ a new creation is coming to birth: renew yourselves."

Jesus declared **John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life."** Jesus is resurrection and life both in the present and in the future. We have a marvelous future in this life and in heaven. The tomb is merely a portal to joy, glory, clarity, harmonious relationships, peace, love and light.

The Apostle Paul wrote. **Colossians 3:1-4 NRSV "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Jesus in glory."**

Pastor Kara Root was asked, "Why do you need the resurrection?" Kara responded, "I need the Resurrection because my sister is sick and can't afford insurance, because I've told a weeping Haitian mom, 'No, I can't take your son home with me.' because I've been rushed off a Jerusalem street so a robot could blow up a bag that could have blown us up. Because I have exploded in rage and watched their tiny faces cloud with hurt. Because evil is pervasive and I participate. I need the Resurrection because it promises that in the end all wrongs are made right. Death loses. Hope triumphs. Life and Love Prevail." Jesus came to resurrect God's plan of peace, well-being, joy, love, and harmony for all creation. Life will win.

John 20:16-18a NRSV "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 sisters 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";"

Jesus opens up a whole new future. Our relationships are shifting. Jesus is our brother. God is our parent. We are each a cherished member of God's family. We are all beloved brothers and sisters in God's family. We are children of light. God is resurrecting in us all that is good and right and true. We are journeying into the light.

Easter is celebrating resurrection for each of us from this world to eternal life in heaven, celebrating that our tomb will also be empty, that our soul will be set free and clothed with our glorious resurrected body. Easter is also for today. Whatever your darkness Jesus will disperse it with heavenly light. Every hope that has died Jesus will resurrect. Every relationship that is broken Jesus will mend. God will resurrect everything and everyone. Angels, all of creation, family, friends, and strangers are all directing you to hear the resurrecting Jesus call your name, to ask you, "Who are you looking for?" Jesus will be exactly who you need. Jesus will lovingly provide all you need. I pray that you will hear God today and every day for Jesus is with you now and will go with you wherever you go. Jesus is guiding you into the light. Amen