

## Easter Day Dawn

27 3 16

Lord of all life and power,  
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son  
overcame the old order of sin and death  
to make all things new in him:  
grant that we, being dead to sin  
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,  
may reign with him in glory.

Our text may be found in the gospel according to Luke, chapter 24 and verse 5:

**‘Why do you look for the living among the dead ? He is not here but has risen.’**

Happy Easter.

What time did you get up today ? What time do you normally, usually, get up on a Sunday morning ? Me ? it’s usually early but then I do go to bed early too. But on that first Sunday morning, what time do you think Mary Magdalene and her companions got up in order to get to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ corpse in the light of an early dawn ?

Well, whatever time they did leave to reach the garden tomb that Joseph of Arimathea had given to Jesus as his last resting place, they were in for a big surprise. They had to wait a whole day because as you know the Sabbath day is a

day of rest. The day for a Jew begins and ends with sunset but even though the Sabbath, which begins on Friday evening and ends at sunset Saturday, they still had to wait for daybreak on the Sunday morning in order to be able to see what they were going to do. And I bet they were not prepared for what they saw and found: the stone rolled away; the tomb empty !

Now whether Mary was alone, as John writes, or there were two of them, as Matthew suggests, or three, as Mark tells us, or more than three, as Luke writes, these women were surprised by what they saw and by what they didn't see: the corpse they had come to pay their last respects to by washing Jesus' body and anointing it with funeral spices was not there. The shroud was there, lying on the stone just as if Jesus had only just slipped away, leaving the linen behind no longer needed. And there were one or two angels, young men in dazzling white robes who, according to Luke, ask the pertinent question and make the extraordinary statement that is our text today:

**'Why do you look for the living among the dead ? He is not here but has risen.'**

It is a wonderful, paradoxical thought that here absence is the proof of presence. If Jesus was dead, then his body should still be in the tomb. If Jesus' body had been stolen, who on earth would first undress the corpse before carrying it off ? But then the angels are there to help the women understand what clearly shocks them: **'He is not here but has risen.'** The absence of his body is the sign of his resurrection, a sign that Jesus would rise again from the dead on the third day and the women remembered what Jesus had told them – that he would indeed rise again to new life after his death.

But the proof of the fact of Jesus rising again from the dead on the third day is not simply that of absence – the empty tomb – but also a whole series of post resurrection appearances: that very night to the disciples in the locked Upper Room; a week later in the same place to them and Thomas who was invited to touch Jesus, to touch the marks of the crucifixion still visible on his hands, feet and body; to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus; to Peter and John and five other disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where they had breakfast together – to name just four.

Sadly, according to Luke, when the women returned to tell the disciples what they had seen, not seen, and heard, what they had to say was dismissed as an ‘idle tale’. But Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself and was truly ‘amazed’ by what he witnessed.

So let me leave you with this question: ‘Is it the absence of Jesus – the empty tomb – that proves the resurrection to you or is it His presence in your everyday life that persuades you that Jesus Christ, our Lord, is risen today – Alleluia ?’

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew’s, Dinard*

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