**Easter Day April 12, 2020**

 Photograph taken c. 1900 of the ruins of [Magdala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdala), Mary Magdalene's hometown[15][16][17]

Today’s gospel is a love story. The protagonist is Mary. She grew up in the fishing village of Magdala, on the western shore of the sea of Galilee. According to John’s gospel, she witnessed the crucifixion, the burial and the empty tomb. Luke’s gospel tells us that earlier, seven demons were driven out from her, prompting her love for the one who had saved her from despair.

Her devotion reflects the compelling personality of the one she loved and followed. Today’s gospel has Mary arriving at the tomb before sunrise. Did she even sleep during the previous hours? When she sees the stone removed from the entrance to the tomb, she doesn’t wander back, she runs to tell the others, including the disciple whom Jesus loved, to report what she has seen.

How very human the story is; not dispassionate, not elevated prose. No one knows who the one Jesus loved was. We know he loved Lazarus, the brother of Martha and the other Mary, to whom he gave new life. Or was it John the son of Zebedee? Perhaps it doesn’t matter. For what DOES stand out is love, forged within the context of the cross, the Roman oppression, the wandering in the wilderness. LOVE stands every time a disciples experiences somehow the risen Christ, the focus of their hopes and a focus of our worship today.

Mary Magdalene and the disciple Jesus loved are singled out, but the rest of the story proves that this love was shared among the community of his friends. Peter and another disciple react to the news of the empty tomb by running together to see what has happened, as if getting there quickly would make any difference. It is all they can do.

When they arrive, they confront a mystery. The wrappings of the corpse are lying around, but the body has disappeared.

The disciples were practical; they didn’t see what they could accomplish by hanging around. But Mary couldn’t bear to leave. She stood weeping outside the tomb. Her presence, her being in the moment and not retreating from her sorrow, is rewarded. When the man she assumed was the gardener speaks her name, she recognizes in him the Jesus whom she loved.

A contemporary poet helps us enter into what happened that early morning, from the standpoint of one woman, the Magdalene. The poem is titled “It’s no wonder:”

**IT’S NO WONDER**

It’s no wonder

Mary of Magdala

traveled with Rabboni

and the twelve

and helped

support His mission

She was a woman on fire

with love and gratitude

a woman freed

of seven snarling demons

It’s no wonder

despite trepidation

she watched at a distance

as they nailed her Great One

to a wretched cross

cupping her ears, wailing

at each resonating hammerfall

No wonder

she drew near

as He hung

in the agony of dying

for being there

was better

than not being there

Mary, bereft

looked upon her Rabboni

as they took Him

from the beams

laid His powerless Body

in the tomb

and rolled a great round stone

across the entrance

separating Him from her

before the sun went down

that Good and terrible Friday

and it’s no wonder

she was back at dawn

the morning after Sabbath

with other ministering women

carrying spices

heedless of who

would roll the stone away

But the tomb was open

and the women trembled

as an angel astounded them

with talk of rising

Bewildered

Mary ran to the apostles

but it’s no wonder

she returned

to grieve near the tomb,

wanting to be

where last He was

A stranger, *the gardener?*

inquired of her weeping

"Sir," she implored

"if you have carried Him away

tell me where you have put Him

and I will get Him"

"Mary…"

"Rabboni!"

Astonished, she reflexively

reached for Him…

"Do not cling to Me"

He told her

"for I have not yet ascended

to My Father"

Oh, it’s no wonder

it was she He entrusted

to bring the news

to the brethren

No wonder

she ran, stumbling over rocks

and potsherd

dashing through brush

and brambles

raising tufts of dust

eager to exclaim

breathless with jubilation

"I have seen the Lord!”

 - Maude Carolan Pych

What Mary discovered is what all Christians discover when we remain faithful…..we will see him when we most need to see him; we will find him in places we do not expect and in people who surprise us with their compassion.

Whenever this happens, we can acclaim, with Christians everywhere, “The Lord has risen indeed.”