

April 21, 2019 Easter Sunrise message

Meditation

How do you experience joy?

Is it in the light and brilliance of a sunrise? Does joy come as in the exuberant outburst of "The Hallelujah Chorus" in Handel's "Messiah"? Perhaps delight bursts into your life with the adoption of a new child or the birth of a grandchild. Maybe joy comes with a new relationship, new job, or any other experience of new life. Maybe you know it in the kindness expressed by someone you spend time with like a life-time partner or a friend you meet regularly for coffee; sometimes an unexpected response from someone you have not known before?

Some mornings joy comes in a "pull-out-all-the-stops-and-sing Hallelujah" kind of way. Sometimes joy's arrival is subtle – like when we rise early in the morning and the frost is still on the windows. We hold the warm coffee closer and read by the fireplace. Slowly, the sun rises, and the world around us becomes filled with light and warmth. Sometimes joy comes like that--slowly, subtly, until we finally notice we've been given another day.

A gradual dawning seemed to be Mary's experience so long ago. Unaccompanied by alleluias, or loud claims of victory, it emerged with a growing awareness out of the tears she brought to this garden site.

Was it her courage that brought her to this place, the courage it takes to face the truthfulness of loss and grief? Was it her faithfulness – her total commitment to the one who had cared for her, cared for the world's brokenness and injustice? Whatever the reason she finds herself early in the morning near the place where they had laid Jesus' body, she discovers an empty tomb and her first reaction is fear. Running to tell Peter and the disciples with him she breathlessly pours out: "They have taken him away, and we do not know where they have laid him." Grief is now compounded - a moment of panic - she is overwhelmed. Peter leaves this place of fear quickly, unaware of the potential transformative power about to burst forth – the power of a new rising – of resurrection.

Mary waits, experiencing the fullness of her grief, unable to even recognize the one who calls her name. Such a calling becomes her turning point – a turning that reverberates down to this very day as you and I gather here in this garden. Here in this place, 2000 years later, we gather in the joy of Easter Day, open to a sense, the possibility of the Creator's power and love ushering in new ways of being in the our world.

Mary left that early morning – in joy! In wonder! And with a message to tell – with good news!

With what words or actions will you go from here to witness to the mystery and joy of resurrection?

*How joy comes isn't as important as *that* it will come--for you, for me, for this whole world. Yes, "weeping may tarry the night," but whether in the brilliance of a sunrise or as subtle as an everyday dawn, joy comes in the morning.*