

**Easter Day**  
**4/4/2010**

**Mark the Evangelist**

**Acts 10:34-43**

**Psalm 118**

**1 Corinthians 15:19-26**

**John 20:1-18**

Sermon preached by Rev. John Hudson

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‘Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge’s name was as good for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don’t mean to say that I know, by my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadliest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Nation’s done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.’

Now, you may think, by quoting from Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” that the preacher has confused Easter-day with Christmas-day. And you could be right. If you were to follow me around the supermarket you may hear me muttering, in liturgical-metre, “onions, oranges, bananas, hair restorer etc, etc”, and needing only to refer to the type-written list in my hand, I still get it wrong. And when the checkout-chick bids me to ‘have a nice day” I absent-mindedly reply, “and also with you”.

But Easter-day it is, and for all of us, in spite of good or bad recall, it is as St.John says, the Divine Remembrencer, the Holy Spirit, who will bring to mind the things of Christ and make them known to us.(Jn.16:13) Indeed a significant part of His ministry to us will be to unremind us of our preconceptions about death, immortality of the soul, resurrection, resuscitation, reincarnation, near death experiences, and anything else that would have us believe that above all else, by nature, the human spirit is equipped to survive anything, particularly death.

So we are reminded by St.John, through the Spirit, that early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the Tomb and saw that stone had been removed. She ran to get Peter and the other disciple and said to them “they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid Him”. The three of them ran to the place of Jesus’s burial and confirmed to themselves, and later to others, that the Tomb was empty and the body gone. They returned to their homes only Mary remained, weeping. Here are enough ingredients for an episode of Midsommer Murders (or as some call it Midslumber Murders) An Inspector Barnaby would have a minimum of forensic evidence: some folded grave clothes a missing body and a few dispirited, confused and doubting witnesses. But he would have in abundance, witnesses to Jesus’ death. Like Marley in Dickens’ novel where his death is attested to by clergyman, clerk, undertaker and chief mourner. Jesus death can be confirmed by the soldiers who crucified Him, the chief priests who mocked Him, and Pilate who before giving permission to Joseph of Arimathea to place Jesus’ body in a tomb, assigned a soldier of some rank, a Centurion, to remove any doubt that Jesus was dead (Mk.15:44-45). And lest it be possible that Jesus own disciples might steal

His body and pretend that He had risen from the dead, the chief priests and some Pharisees appointed several men to stand guard at the tomb to prevent such an occurrence (Matt.27:62-66).

But for Mary her Lord's death is no subject for political intrigue and judicial murder, but the loss of someone she has loved and who loved her.

So to look into the empty tomb whilst still weeping and to be asked by two messengers or angels as to why she weeps, the answer must seem obvious, she is mourning for Him who has died and who now is absent from the place where she would expect to find Him.

When St.Paul by the guidance of the same Spirit of Truth that Jesus promised to His disciples in John's Gospel, declares that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall be made alive" (1Cor.15:22) he is speaking of something that is more than proof of individual survival beyond death. This is declaration that even as we live and breathe we contain within us a preoccupation for survival at all costs, even at the cost of the death of God upon the Cross.

When we live alienated from ourselves, each other and from God, we are condemned to live as if this life is the only one we have, or if there is another that it will be at least as good if not better than the one we know. Mary is questioned by the angels in the Tomb as to why she weeps, and the implication is, that she no longer has to. And not just because if she goes outside she will see the revived body of Jesus, or proof that someone she has loved and who has loved her has survived death by resurrection or resuscitation or whose spirit has been released from the confines of their mortal body. The one she meets in the garden is not her lord dressed in overalls, gumboots and a straw-hat encouraging his disciples to follow him to some heavenly nirvana, where all will be peace and light. No, she meets the one who is truly her Lord, the Lord over death and life for all.

She and the other disciples are the primary witnesses to the Resurrection. Not as a concept a theory a human hope, but a trust in the Risen One, Jesus Himself. So Mary has no further need to mourn and weep, no need to seek the Living among the dead (Lk.24:5) Indeed her testimony to the other disciples on that day was, "I have seen the Lord" As in Adam all die, for that we weep and mourn for ourselves and all fallen creation; even so in Christ shall all be made alive, for that we shout and sing Alleluia for all redeemed creation.

On the stand beside the Communion table is a bronze depiction of the Risen Lord from a church in Munich. It seeks to show what St.John wants us to see namely, that it is both the crucified and risen Lord that appears before His disciples then and now. For on the evening of that First-day he appeared before them saying "Peace be with you" and He showed them His hands and His side. "As the Father has sent me so I send you" So the proof of Christ's Resurrection life is placed into the hands of His Church, then seen and now unseen at this table through His Word and in His world.

Benediction means "a good word" a blessing. Having seen so much Christmas niceness around him Tiny Tim had cause to say, "God bless us, everyone".

But it is from the mouth of the tortured and triumphant One that the best words of encouragement come this Easter-day, "Blessed are those who have not seen yet have come to believe." Hallelujah!

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