**Reflection on John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12**

**Do you see what I see? (20-26 April 2025)**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Creator God,
you who scattered the stars
and filled the deep oceans,
**come, God, be with us here.**
Saviour God,
you who suffered for us
and danced from death to new life,
**come, God, be with us here.**
Spirit God,
you who are as wild as the wind
and fill our hearts with fire,
**come, God, be with us here.**
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**

Mary Magdalene is named in the first three Gospels as among the women who discover the empty tomb. In John’s Gospel, she alone rises early to find that ‘they have taken the Lord out of the tomb’ (v.2). In the other Gospels the men are not involved until later. In Matthew (28:9-10), Mary Magdalene and ‘the other Mary’ meet the risen Jesus, who commissions them to tell his brothers to meet him in Galilee. In Mark (16:7-8), they and Salome are similarly commissioned, ‘but they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid’. And in Luke 24:1-12 (the alternative Gospel reading for today), the larger group of women do tell the male apostles that Jesus is risen, but they are not believed. It is not surprising, given the traumatic loss of the Lord they loved and the shocking discovery that his body was not there for them to anoint, that there are different versions and visions of the extraordinary events of that first Easter.

In John’s version, there is a more complex interweaving of male and female characters. Mary Magdalene immediately runs to share her news that the body is missing with Peter and the beloved disciple. They run to the tomb and move things on by going inside to find the discarded linen wrappings. The beloved disciple begins to believe, perhaps at this stage beginning to see that God has acted in some way. It is not yet belief in the resurrection, since we are explicitly told, ‘for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead’ (v.9). And indeed they return to their homes without a word either to Mary or to each other.

But Mary stays by the tomb, explaining her weeping to the strangers sitting there. In that moment of sharing her grief she turns to encounter the risen Jesus, who by recognising her for who she is, ‘Mary’, enables her to respond, ‘Rabbouni’ (v.16). The process of interaction between the women and men in the story, ‘Do you see what I see?’, continues as Mary announces to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’ (v.18).

 **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Three people in this story have very different reactions to the dramatic events. John rushes to get there first – but stops at the threshold, unable to understand what he can see. Peter rushes straight in as always, which encourages John to follow him, but then they both just go home. Mary, on the other hand, has grieved and watched and waited, and so becomes the first to meet the risen Jesus. The disciples wanted to withdraw away from all the danger and pain; Mary just wanted to be close to Jesus. She knew where to look but even then she didn’t recognise him at first. Which type of person are we, as we look for Jesus in our world today? Do we rush to look but don’t see at first? Do we march boldly in but don’t always wait for a response? Or do we wait and look and eventually see?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What can you see in this image?
* Can you recall a time when your eyes deceived you, or you were completely mistaken? What did you learn?
* How might the events at Easter change the way we view the world around us?

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

We’ve seen the good news –
the tomb is empty, Christ is risen!
**Hallelujah!**
We’ve heard the good news –
death is disrupted, God is on the loose!
**Hallelujah!**
We’ll take the good news
and share it far and wide.
**Hallelujah! Christ is risen!**
Amen.