

**Do You See Him?**  
**The Reverend Debbie Cook, Grace Church in Haddonfield**  
**Easter Day, RCL Lectionary Year A, Matthew 28:1-10**  
**March 23, 2008**

When I was in college, I lived off-campus in a rented condo outside of Yardley, PA. It was on a small road, not too far from Route 95, and a short distance from the Oxford Valley Mall. The condo community was new and still in the process of being built when we moved in, and there was nothing within walking distance except trees and the train tracks.

A few years ago, I returned to that area, doing a chaplaincy rotation at St. Mary Hospital in Langhorne, PA. I took a ride one day to look for my former residence—and frankly, got a little disoriented. They had literally moved some of the roads! But eventually I found my way, even recognizing some old landmarks—a certain house or two, a particular light. And when I reached the condo community, I very nearly laughed. The railroad remained, but all the rest had drastically changed—where there was once nothing but fields and trees, there was a supermarket, pizzeria, and other conveniences; stop lights, wider roads, and more condos. It was certainly not as I had remembered, certainly not what I had expected to see.

The two Marys did not see what they expected to see either. They had watched and stood by as the crucified and lifeless body of their Lord and friend, Jesus, had been placed in a securely sealed tomb by Joseph of Arimathea. They made sure to remember the location so they could find it once again after the Sabbath was over. As soon as the light began to change the dark night sky to shades of gray, then pink, on that Sunday morning, the two Marys made their way to the tomb. They needed to see that Jesus was still there, to be with him in the only way that they now could. They moved quietly through the streets and then out of the city, making sure they did not draw too much attention to themselves. They had heard that there was a guard posted at

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the tomb, but felt compelled to come nonetheless. Perhaps the guard would not bother them; after all, how dangerous could two women weeping at the tomb be? But they had to come, needed to come.

When they arrived at the tomb, everything changed. The sealed tomb was there, the guards stood nearby—but as they approached, the earth shook greatly. Before they could even fully recover their balance, a blinding white angel appeared and removed the large tombstone, resting upon it. The guards, trained for battle of an earthly kind, were overwhelmed with fear, unable to react. The women stood rooted to the ground, perhaps frozen in place, barely believing what they were seeing; a heavenly being, an open tomb. And hearing words! The angel spoke to them; Jesus is not here, he is raised; go to Galilee to see him there. Come, see the place where he lay. And they looked, and Jesus was not there; the tomb which looked nearly impenetrable such a short time ago stood empty. Jesus' dead and broken body was gone; raised, the angel said. But how? When? Was this for real?

And while we hold this image of the women dashing off immediately to spread the good news, I can only imagine their state of mind, their emotions at this time. They had seen Jesus die, seen him placed in the tomb. They carried the grief in their broken hearts, had cried endless tears. And then in an instant, all had changed; nothing was as expected, it seemed as if the very world had been turned upside down. The tomb was empty, Jesus was alive, and angels dared to speak to ordinary women like themselves. They could not have expected to see anything like this, for it was miraculous, wonderful, and beyond knowing. Fear and awe gripped them, joy welled up

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inside them, amazement filled them. And they knew the angel was right; the message needed to be delivered, to be shared. Such news could not wait, and off they ran.

They had not gone far, when Jesus appeared to them. This was not the Jesus they had come to see when they left their home this morning with heavy hearts—no, this was Jesus alive, resurrected, filled with new life. And now the rising joy that they had felt overtook them, the fear left them. Here, in front of them, real and living and touchable, was the one they loved and the one who loved them, greeting them, giving them the same message that the angel did. It was not a dream after all, not a vision of something yet to come. Love lives, the impossible does happen. Jesus is risen— and the two Marys had seen him.

The question is—do we?

The Jesus who lived so long ago in Palestine, who suffered, and died, and yes, rose again, lives among us still. All we need do is open our eyes and see—see with our hearts as well as our eyes. The same Jesus we hear about in our gospels is still here—walking with and in the poor, the broken, the homeless, the grieving. If you look and listen closely, you will see him in the eyes of the suffering and the weary, hear him in the words of those seeking justice and peace and those pleading the plight of the hungry and destitute. You can feel his touch in every act of compassion, every hand stretched out to comfort and heal. Each kind word spoken, tear shed, meal offered is a tangible reminder of Jesus' presence in love and care.

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In a world that is too often saturated by violence and division and fear, it is easy to lose sight of Jesus. The voices and forces of the world can overtake us, directing us down dead-end roads in search of personal fulfillment or success or wealth or power. The landmarks that God places for us can get obscured by anger or bitterness or just plain cynicism. And yet Jesus is never far away, calling to us to come back to the road of life and light—that place where we are reminded once again of who we are.

For who are is the body of Christ—Jesus alive today. You may not see it, or even feel it, but Jesus lives in you and me. In baptism, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we died with Jesus, and were raised to new life with him as well. The resurrected Jesus, who greeted the two Marys on the road, who met his disciples in Galilee, who ascended into heaven, still leads us today, and beckons to us to follow. We are still and always called to be witnesses to life beyond the power of death, to hope prevailing against despair, to love that can transform even the most hardened heart. For we too are called to be resurrection witnesses, like the two Marys and the disciples.

So, go and tell forth the good news:

Jesus is risen! Creation is renewed.

Jesus is risen! Love lives.

Jesus is risen! Do you see him?

He is here.

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Alleluia!