

Easter Day: 4/17/22  
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*"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."*

This *is* marvelous. What a gorgeous place. Look at those flowers.  
You look fantastic. I'm loving the music. Everything seems perfect.  
I'm so glad I came to set the record straight –  
about me, Mary Magdalene.

I hope you'll not think me overly sensitive, but I'd like to put  
that portrayal of me you just heard in John's Gospel in some perspective.  
I don't mean to brag, but let the record show that I was the one,  
*the only one*,  
who had the guts to go – alone – to Jesus' tomb that morning  
while it was still dark.  
And, this, barely three days since he'd been killed in a  
gruesome public execution by the state.

And, further, after finding the tomb empty, I had the good sense to  
run tell the male disciples that Jesus' body was missing.  
When three of us went back to the tomb,  
the two guys "didn't understand scripture" (John's words, not mine!)  
so returned home.  
But I stuck it out. I stayed there by the tomb, alone,  
just as I had stayed there by the cross without them on Good Friday.

Is it any wonder that I, Mary Magdalene, am sometimes called  
"the apostle to the apostles."

So, under those circumstances, can you blame me for weeping?  
For feeling shell-shocked and traumatized?  
Given all I'd been through, wouldn't it have been weirder not to be?

So, yes, of course I weeping, looking out through bleary tear-soaked eyes.  
Yes, I was disoriented.  
Yes, I was confused, momentarily, when Jesus appeared in the flesh to comfort me.  
I didn't recognize him as Jesus right away.  
We were in a garden so naturally I thought he must be the gardener.

Oh, you can laugh at this case of mistaken identity if you want,  
 but now that I've got my wits about me,  
 now that I've had a chance to think about it,  
 I've decided I was right the first time.

Jesus *is* a gardener.

Gardens are miraculous places where heaven and earth  
 delight together.

And just as all these flowers have seeds or bulbs buried deep in the dark earth,  
 so Jesus lay in the tomb before rising up to new life.

It's like a butterfly emerging from the tomb of the chrysalis to soar into  
 the fullness of life.

Jesus is a gardener. And we are the garden he tends.

Each of us, beautiful in our own way,  
 planted and nurtured, watered and pruned,  
 tenderly coaxed to blossom into new and vigorous life with Jesus.

So we've established that I know a thing or two about trauma.

I gather you do too.

I hear about this weird pandemic that has cost the lives of more than  
 a million of your fellow citizens, not yet properly mourned,  
 which has caused grave disruption and disorientation  
 even for those of you fortunate enough to ride it out.

There is violence and war, and war crimes, in your time  
 as there were in mine, and you don't know where it may go next.

You're blessed with an economy, and something called democracy and self-rule,  
 that people in my time could scarcely dream of.

Yet it somehow feels a bit tentative these days.

And God knows what personal burdens you've dragged with you here today.

It all sounds exhausting.

Maybe you need to do some weeping?

So I figured there was one more thing I might clear up for you  
 while I'm here.

You know that part at the beginning of the gospel lesson,  
 where it mentions the disciple "whom Jesus loved"?

For centuries folks have debated who that is –

Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead?  
John the Evangelist himself? Someone else?  
Or maybe even me.

Well, I'm here to tell you today that ... it *is* me.  
I am the disciple whom Jesus loves. And so are you.  
And so are people you find difficult to love.  
Scripture teaches that God shows "no partiality";  
God in Christ Jesus loves you, me and all of Creation.

We are the garden from which Jesus brings new life.  
We are the disciples whom Jesus loves.

I've gone to a little effort, travelling these 2,000 years,  
to share this Good News with you today.  
I ask only that you please pass along what I have said to you –  
about Jesus bringing new life out of the darkness of death,  
and love without measure.

This world that God so loves deserves to hear it from you,  
and see it embodied in your life.

Amen. Alleluia!

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