

Two heart-broken women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, walk slowly toward Jesus' tomb. They are carrying the spices to anoint his body for burial, a task put off by the intervening sabbath. You can almost hear their conversation: "His teaching was so inspiring." "His miracles so surprising." "Why did they kill him?" And more practically, "How will we ever move the great stone covering the entrance?"

And then there was an earthquake, an angel, and an empty tomb. Twice, they were told not to be afraid. For which of us wouldn't be when faced with something so inexplicable. But before they could ask, "Where is Jesus' body?" they have their answer. "He has been raised." And from that moment on something deep and profound was revealed, again and ultimately, God's incredible love.

God's love revealed in creation, when all was pronounced "Good." God's love revealed in the wilderness when the Israelites were saved from slavery by the parting of the Red Sea, and then through the prophets who came to save them from themselves. God's love born of the virgin Mary, Jesus, God incarnate, God's son. And then, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" over to death on the cross, so that God's ultimate act of love in raising him to new life, could be seen and known by all. The love that was revealed by those women who proclaimed Christ risen to the disciples and to the world. A love the world, and we, still desperately need.

It was the Empire that pronounced Jesus' death sentence, for their own gain, not because of anything he had done. He was innocent and yet he was put to death by the powerful who were afraid to lose their grip on power because of a man who was calling them to a new, and more just, way of life, the way of love. And while everything changed that early dawn, the world has not changed.

We bask in the hope and promise of the resurrection here on Easter morning – forgiven, healed, and renewed. We know and proclaim the love God has for us, God's beloved children. But what happens when the joy and hope of the mystery of Easter meets our daily reality? Because, as author Barbara Johnson says so clearly, "We are Easter people living in a Good Friday world."

So, as Easter people, how do we live in this broken world, full of hate, division, injustice, poverty, and all the other markers of a world failing to live into God's love.

We only need to go back to Maundy Thursday when all Jesus had been teaching and living was laid out for the disciples, and us, in three ways. We love one another through servant leadership. There is no power here, just a deep and abiding care for the well-being of others. We join together at a common meal, in the real presence of Jesus found in the blessed bread and wine. Nourished by the body of Christ, we become the body of Christ for the world. We love one another as God loves us.

The part of the conversation we don't hear, but I imagine these two faithful women having might be something like this, "I can't believe God would allow Jesus to die and so violently. I trust God will make this right, that somehow this will all be OK." And in the end, at the empty tomb, it was.

When the world acted, God acted. The wrongs of the world were righted. Death was defeated. And there was nothing more to fear.

We need God. We need the risen Christ. To make the world's, and our, brokenness bearable. To give us hope that healing and wholeness are still possible. To ensure there is nothing more to fear.

Resurrection is just one of God's words for love. Forgiveness is another. Charity, kindness, justice, peace are all words for God's love. We can claim these words for ourselves; live into them as Jesus showed us. And just as we are changed by the many ways God shows us God's love, we can change the world. One act of love at a time. Until we, as Easter people, are living in an Easter world.