

The Rev. Dr. Mary Barber
4.5.26 - Easter Sunday

Allelujah! The Lord is Risen! St Martin's, the Lord is risen!

Have you seen Jesus today?

We just heard about Mary Magdalene and the other Mary meeting the risen Christ. They go to see the tomb, after watching him suffer and die on the cross. There is an earthquake. An angel rolls back the stone and gives Mary and Mary a message. He is not here. He has been raised. Go and tell the others.

Then, on their way to meet the other disciples, Mary and Mary meet Jesus.

After all this, the suffering, the death, the anxious return to the tomb, the earthquake, Jesus meets these women on the road and says -- what? He says, "Greetings!"

Now this word that Jesus says to the women in his resurrected state really startled me when I read it this year. I was certain that the Greek word used must have some other, more profound meaning to it, that Jesus really couldn't have just said, Greetings. So I looked it up using some Bible tools, and consulted the non-Bible tool called Google, and all these sources agreed that the Greek word used in this Gospel, the thing Jesus says to the women, means "Hello."

Hello. Hello? Jesus, really? I am imagining what the women might have thought that day when they saw Jesus on the road, after all he had been through and all they had been through, and he just appears and says, Hello.

Really, Jesus? We loved you, we watched you die, we saw your empty grave and talked to an angel, and all you can say is "Hello"?

But maybe they were not bothered by this casual greeting at all.

After all, the women were there with him through everything. They followed beside him as he marched to his execution. They stood weeping at the foot of the cross, probably for many hours. They helped carry his body to the tomb and wrap it in burial cloths. And here they were, at the tomb again, at dawn.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary walked with Jesus in his last days and hours. Just as they walked with him before that. They were with him, hearing his preaching and teaching, witnessing his miracles, eating and praying and walking with him, sharing struggles and joys and maybe a few jokes, through his whole ministry.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were with Jesus the whole time. At the end of his life, they barely left his side. They witnessed all of it, all the horror and suffering. They stuck with Jesus, no matter how scary or hard it got. They were the first to see the risen Jesus.

They had so much contact with Jesus, so much proximity to his ministry, suffering and death, so much familiarity and intimacy, that maybe it just seemed natural that their teacher and friend would just pop out and say Hi! Just as they were not deterred by the cross, which made the other disciples run away, just as they were not fazed by the earthquake, which left the soldiers like dead men, the Marys were not startled or surprised by the risen Jesus' greeting.

St Martin's, have you seen Jesus today?

I wonder if there is another reason for this seemingly casual meeting between Jesus and the women, another reason that he just pops out and says Hello, another reason they respond like it's the most natural thing for Jesus to be there and to greet them in that way.

Because they were there for all of it, the women observed close up all the violence and suffering of the cross, and it must have torn at their heart to see this Jesus who they loved so much suffer and die in that way. Perhaps they were so shattered, so brokenhearted, that there was no more room for fear of what might happen to them.

They took their devastated, brokenhearted selves to the tomb that morning. And just like every other time when they needed comfort and healing, or someone in their group or in the crowd needed comfort and healing, just like every other time when their mission was so hard that they wondered whether they could go on and they asked Jesus for help, Jesus was there. Jesus had always been there for them during his active ministry. And here he was again, in their time of need.

Of course Jesus is here, they thought. He is always here when we need him.

And it is the same for us, today. Jesus comes to the brokenhearted, right here and now.

Jesus comes to the brokenhearted.

He comes to us who are sick, who are grieving, to those of us who are exhausted from caregiving.

He comes to us who are overwhelmed by the violence and cruelty in our world right now.

Jesus comes to those of us who don't know how we got ourselves here today and are not sure how we will get up and do it again tomorrow.

He comes to those of us struggling to pay for food and gas.

He comes to the person terrified and alone in their detention cell, and to their spouse and children worried sick about them.

Jesus comes to us when we wonder whether our little actions to push for change really have any effect. Yes, they matter, he says, and I'm marching right beside you.

Jesus comes to all of us who are brokenhearted, shattered, in need.

That first day of the week, that day of resurrection, Jesus showed that love is stronger than death, that love cannot be killed on a cross or contained in any tomb. The angel rolls away the stone not to let Jesus out, but to show that he isn't there at all, because there is no stone big enough to imprison love.

Jesus comes to the brokenhearted. And to the just plain frazzled. And he comes to the joyous too.

So look around you, St Martin's. Look to your right and look to your left. You may just see Jesus. Jesus, the risen one, greeting you like an old friend, saying, Hello. Allelujah, St Martin's! Amen.