

3/1/18 Mk. 16:01-7& Acts 10:34-43

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[Roll Away the Stone](#)

(Biblical Archaeology Review 7-8/1986 Page 20)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

The huge stone, the danger, the unimaginable grief, nothing deterred the two Mary's from trying to respond in the most loving way they could think of that early pre-dawn morning. The Sabbath finally over, they took their first opportunity to rush to the tomb to provide what little they could do to make this terrible wrong –

right. Let us go with them now to lend them our support.

(Easter Vigil gospel)

Mark 16:1 When the **Sabbath** was over, **Mary Magdalene, Mary** the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 **Very early** on the first day of the week, **just after sunrise**, they were on their way to the **tomb** 3 and they asked each other, "**Who will roll the stone away** from the entrance of the **tomb**?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the **stone**, which was **very large**, had been **rolled away**. 5 As they entered the **tomb**, they saw a **young man dressed in a white robe** sitting on the right side, and they were **alarmed**. 6 Don't be **alarmed**," he said. "You are looking for **Jesus the Nazarene**, who was **crucified**. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 **But go, tell** his disciples and Peter, '**He is going ahead of you** into Galilee. There you will see him, **just as he told you**.'" "

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Mark tells us that Jesus is going ahead of us. How do you make sense of that?

PRAYER: Hopefully our Lenten times of reflection and prayer have rolled away some stones for us. Stones of doubt. Stones of fear. Stones of grief. We believe the Resurrection opens the closed tomb of death. Now we trust that God's love for us is always there. For now we pray that our ability to trust what the angel told the women is true for us as well. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

SABBATH: People were prohibited from traveling or doing any work on the Sabbath (Saturday). Since the burial was a hurried affair on Friday, the women had to wait until it was over in order to go to the grave and anoint the body properly.

The women had to wait for the right time to do what they had to do for Jesus. Sometimes timing is everything. Remember the last time you waited for the "right moment" to do something for someone you love. What feelings do you remember about that situation? How does remembering your own situation help you to connect with the two Mary's?

MARY MAGDALENE, MARY: These two Mary's are the ones recorded as the first to approach the tomb that first Easter morning. Their names mean "beloved" in the original language of the scriptures. They were expecting to find a dead body, but their love needed to do whatever they could to make it "better".

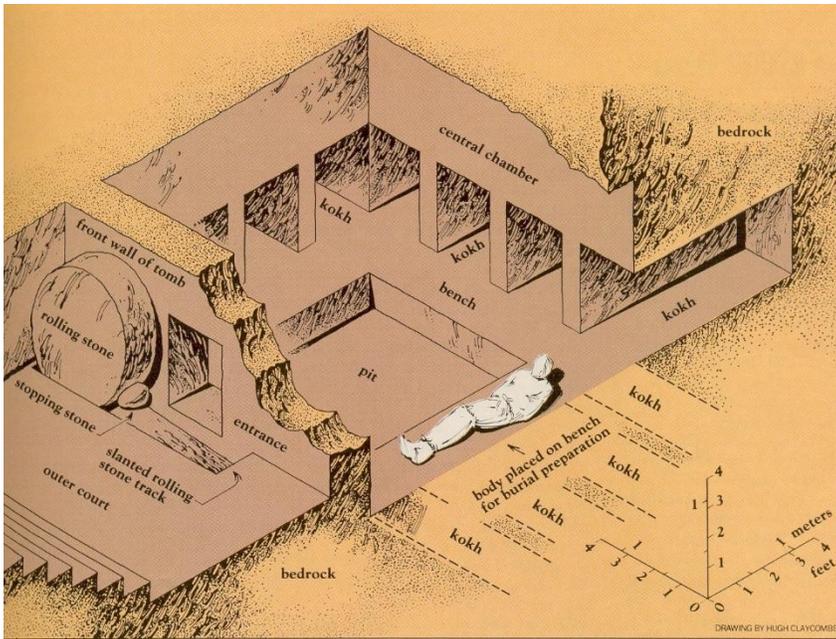
No one, the women included expected anything but a dead body that first Easter morning, but love impelled them to do what they could anyway. How has your love moved you to do whatever you could for someone, even though your hopes had been dashed? How has this Lent helped you to enter into the same kind of love as the two Mary's?

VERY EARLY / JUST AFTER SUNRISE: It must have been a long tortured wait for the women. At the first rays of light they make off for the tomb. They are apparently fearless as they dash to the tomb.

Waiting is the hardest work we often do and it especially difficult when it involves fear and loss. What might be the best explanation of the women's behavior? How has your love for someone caused you to become fearless and able to continue even though the situation seemed hopeless?

TOMB/ STONE: Tombs are usually places of ends. This tomb is the place of Jesus and our beginnings. Stones are things that are often heavy to move.

When you visit a grave, do you see it as a place of an ending rather than a place of a beginning? What "stones" need moving so you can see death as a re-birth? How heavy are the doubts of life after life for you?



WHO WILL ROLL THE STONE AWAY: The stones that sealed tombs were huge. (See pictures) There is no mention of any of the disciples accompanying them to the tomb in any of the gospels.

Has your love rolled away any “stones” for someone else? Why do you think the women had to go alone to the tomb? Who are the people who have “rolled away a stone” for you? How did they do that?

YOUNG MAN DRESSED IN A WHITE ROBE: Angels are often pictured like this. They are always messengers from God.

Do you remember feeling that something bigger than you was moving you to do something for someone? Has anyone ever called you an angel because of it? Who have been messengers from God for you?

ALARMED: An open tomb suggested a stolen body. Now the women are afraid.

The women seem unconcerned about their personal safety when they go to the tomb, but the possibility that someone has stolen the body now caused them alarm. What is it about love for someone that causes us to ignore our own needs and focus on theirs? What does this tell you about these women?

JESUS THE NAZARENE: Now Jesus as the holy man of God is fully revealed.

Now the young man in white uses the same description for Jesus that Judas and the soldiers did at the arrest. How does this help you to fully understand Jesus and what he has done for you?

BUT GO, TELL: The women are instructed to go and tell Jesus’ disciples and Peter what they have experienced.

Our faith in the empty tomb gives us the same task. How do you “go and tell” others about God’s love for them because of your awareness of God’s love for you?

HE IS GOING AHEAD OF YOU: Jesus now is out ahead of the expectations of anyone there that day.

In what ways do you experience Jesus “going ahead” of you and awaiting you?

JUST AS HE TOLD YOU: Throughout his ministry, Jesus has been telling anyone able to listen that this would happen.

The people had been told repeatedly that Jesus would rise from the dead, but no one believed it. Is there anything keeping you from believing it now? What would help get beyond this “stone”?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 28: 1-10// Lk. 24: 1-11//Jn. 20: 1-10

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: [Acts 10:34-43](#) or [Isaiah 25:6-9](#), [Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23](#), Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor. 6b-8, [John 20:1-18](#) or [Mark 16:1-8](#)

Revised Common Lectionary: [Acts 10:34, 37-43](#), [Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24](#), [1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#), [John 20:1-9](#)

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION;

Resurrection is the Incarnation taken to its full and logical conclusion. Richard Rohr

The resurrection of the body means that what we have lived in the body will not go to waste but will be lifted in our eternal life with God. As Christ bears the marks of his suffering in his risen body, our bodies in the resurrection will bear the marks of our suffering. Our wounds will become signs of glory in the resurrection. Henri Nouwen

Remember that this next dimension is not the same things as the afterlife. It is not later but lighter, a more subtle quality of aliveness that aired works with us (otherwise we would not be alive at all) and has ever been the real causal ground from which we receive out

life breath by breath. The only change in state imparted by physical death is that during the time we are outwardly clothed in human flesh it appears to be inside us; after the physical body has dropped away, we discover that all along we have been inside it! Pg. 188. Bourgeault, Cynthia *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three*. Shambhala Pub, In. Boulder, Co 2013

When you go to the full depths and death, sometimes even the depths of your sin, you can always come out the other side—and the word for that is resurrection. Something or someone builds a bridge for you, recognizable only from the far side, that carries you across, either willingly, or even dragging your feet. Something or someone seems to fill the tragic gap between death and life, but only at the point of no return. None of us crosses over by our own effort or merits, purity, or perfection. We are all carried across by an uncreated and unearned grace—from pope, to president, to princess, to peasant. The tomb is always finally empty. There are no exceptions to death, and there are no exceptions to grace. And I believe, with good evidence, that there are no exceptions to resurrection. Richard Rohr

The Resurrection is not a one-time miracle that proved Jesus was God. Jesus' death and resurrection name and reveal what is happening everywhere and all the time in God and in everything God creates. Reality is always moving toward resurrection. As prayers of the Catholic funeral Mass affirm, "Life is not ended but merely changed." This is the divine mystery of transformation, fully evident in the entire physical universe. Richard Rohr

The Resurrection is not a metaphor, it is a direct and intelligible fact of existence, as personal and universal as gravity and falling in love. If we are indifferent to this manifestation of the fundamental principle of reality at its deepest core, then we are the ones who have died at our own hands and are in need of a personal resurrection. Dr. David Hirstius'

A generation ago, Karl Rahner, famously remarked that in the next generation we will either be mystics or unbelievers. Among other things, what Rahner meant was that, unlike previous generations where our communities (family, neighborhood, and church) very much helped carry the faith for us, in this next generation we will very much have to find our own, deeper, personal grounding for our faith. [Fr. Ron Rolheiser](#)

Who knows? Maybe there is a hint hidden within the text of Mark. In the beginning of the passion narrative, Mark 14:3-9 here is the story of a woman who comes while Jesus is reclining at table. When she anoints him with perfumed oil, some are indignant, but Jesus says, "She has anticipated the anointing of my body for burial." Now, at the end of the passion narrative, Mark 16: 1, the women "brought spices so that they might go and anoint him." Neither anointing is quite complete. "In 14: 3-9, the action is premature, since Jesus is still alive. In 16:1, it is too late; his body is no longer present to them." What is to happen next is found in the statement of the angel, "He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." Perhaps the incompleteness of the story is intentional on the part of the biblical author. Perhaps he is addressing the reader and saying, "This is your story, too, and you must go to Galilee and see him as he told you." It calls the reader to become a participant in the completion of the story and not a spectator; each of us is called to go to Galilee and see once again the risen Christ. We all need to see Jesus and decide whether to accept or reject his message and his mission. Wessels, Cletus. [Jesus in the New Universe Story](#). Maryknoll NY. Orbis Books. 2003. Page 101.

There seems to be no more fitting way to include those who have journeyed before us.

"All of you women at the tomb, holding your oils and spices, symbols of your love for the Lord. Women in love. Pray for us. Wessels, Cletus. [Jesus in the New Universe Story](#). Maryknoll NY. Orbis Books. 2003. Pages 156 and 159.

The ancient rabbis teach that on the seventh day, God created *menuha* – tranquility, serenity peace, and repose – rest, in the deepest possible sense of fertile, healing stillness. Until the Sabbath, creation was unfinished. Only after the birth of *menuha*, only with tranquility and rest, was the circle of creation made full and complete.

Christians celebrate Sabbath at the beginning of the week, to commemorate Jesus' resurrection. We remember the tender gratefulness of Mary, who went out in the early morning to weep for a beloved friend who had died – only to hear his loving voice comfort and caress her. Sabbath implies a willingness to be surprised by unexpected grace, to partake of those potent moments when creation renews itself, when what is finished inevitably recedes, and the sacred forces of healing astonish us with the unending promise of love and life. When we gather together to worship and pray in this Sabbath time, we prepare our hearts and souls to be nourished and surprised by fruitful beginnings. And so, only in the soil of Sabbath tranquility can we see the possibility of beginning a new day, a new week – even a new life – again and again, each time with fresh eyes, rested and refreshed, born within the completely gratuitous sanctuary of time. Muller, Wayne. [Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest](#). NY. Bantam Books.1999. Pages 37-38.

16.1–8: The empty tomb (Mt 28.1–8; Lk 24.1–11; Jn 20.1–10). 1: Jewish customs of anointing for burial can also be found at m. Shabb. 23.5, where the limitations on preparation of the body on the Sabbath are also noted. Thus the women wait until the Sabbath [is] over to prepare Jesus' body for proper burial. Two different tombs of Jesus have been marked in Jerusalem over the centuries, but neither has any historical claim. 5–6: Young man, Mark once again understates the divine significance: the figure is dressed as a vindicated martyr (Dan 11.35, "be made white"). Similarly, Jesus' clothing in the Transfiguration (9.3,6) is white. 7: Mark predicts

Jesus' appearance in Galilee (cf. 14.28), which is followed by Matthew's account; Luke puts the appearances in Jerusalem, Emmaus, and Bethany, all in Judea; John 21 places an appearance by the Sea of Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee) in Galilee, while John 20 and the longer ending of Mark (see below), like Luke, place the resurrection appearances in Jerusalem. 8: The ending does not provide the anticipated appearance, which would have been well known. Pg. 94. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

To Matt. 28:1, 5-8 = Mark 16:1-8 = Luke 24:1-11 cf. [Gospel of Peter](#) XII. SO—XIII. 57—5 Now early on the Lord's day Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord—who was afraid because of the Jews, for they were inflamed with anger and had not done at the tomb of the Lord the things which women usually do to their loved ones when they die—took friends with her, and came to the tomb where he was laid. '- And they feared lest the Jews see them, and said, "Even if we were not able to weep and lament him on the day on which he was crucified, yet let us now do so at his tomb. "' But who will roll away the stone for us that is set against the door of the tomb that we may enter and sit beside him and perform our obligations?" For the stone was large. "We fear lest someone see us. But if we cannot, then let us lay beside the door the things which we have brought in remembrance of him, and we will weep and lament until we get home." XIII .and they went and found the tomb open; and they went near and looked in there, and saw there a young man sitting in the middle of the tomb, handsome, and dressed in a brilliant robe. And he said to them, "Why have you come? Whom do you seek? Not him who was crucified, for he has risen and gone. But if you do not believe it, look in and see the place where he lay, that he is not here. Pg. 187. [Gospel Parallels](#)

Easter begs us to refrain from killing life before its dead. Easter declares that our notions of conclusions are nothing more than indicators of beginnings. Easter invites us to believe that what is done is often only done because we have deemed it so, and that such a judgement does not possess the power to actually make it so. Easter is a promise that there is always something that follows the darkest night, the most desolate moment, the most detestable actions, and the most searing pain. Easter is about conclusions being the very beginnings that we are in such desperate need of. Easter asks that we quit burying that which is not dead out of the fear of how glorious life might actually be if we let it live. That is both the promise and invitation of Easter! - Craig D. Lounsbrough

final stage of incarnation is resurrection! This is no exceptional miracle only done once in the body of Jesus. It is the final and fulfilled state of all embodiment. Now even the new physics tells us that matter itself is a manifestation of spirit, and spirit or shared consciousness is the real thing. Matter also seems to be eternal. We do say in the Creed that we believe in "the resurrection of the body," whereas many of us--still followers of Plato more than Jesus--only believe in the eternal nature of the soul. Richard Rohr

The human spirit abides in the body very much as the chicken in the shell. If it were possible for the bird within the shell to be told that outside of it was a great widespread world, with all kinds of fruit and flowers, with rivers and grand mountains, that its mother also was there, and that it would see all this when set free from its shell, it could not understand or believe it.... In the same way there are many who are uncertain about the future life and the existence of God, because they cannot see beyond this shell-like body of flesh, and their thoughts, like delicate wings, cannot carry them beyond the narrow confines of the brain. Their weak eyes cannot discover those eternal and unfading treasures which God has prepared for those who love Him. - Sadhu Sundar Singh

EARLY APRIL EASTER

We are saved, we just don't feel it yet.
Anxiously we study lawn and garden
rejoicing in the sparse occasional blooms
while dead leaves linger to be raked.
The mighty oaks condescend not
to early leaf, unbending in their patience.
But forsythias of blinding gold
bend and beckon their hosannas,
generous, profligate their blessed sprays.
Wait no longer, proclaim it now!
The earth awakens, the empty tomb
makes believers of us all.

Helen Fitzgerald NCR 8/13/99