

Easter Sunday 2024 – John 20:1-9

The time is early and it is still dark, which means for John that Christ who is the light of the world is absent. Three disciples react to this absence.

Mary Magdalene is the first: we read only the first half of her story, but we notice how her faith is at an early stage. Her devotion brought her to the tomb, but the missing body can only mean that someone has taken it away. Jesus himself will have to search her out to bring her to full believe.

The second is Peter. At the end of the discourse on the Bread of Life, he made an impressive personal commitment to Jesus, but later denied three times that he even knew him. So wounded was he spiritually by these denials that even though he saw the grave clothes lying there, he could not conclude to the truth.

The third disciple is not named, but he has already appeared at the side of Jesus at the supper and was present at the foot of the cross. He enjoyed this intimacy with Jesus because he already had the right relationship with him, that of mutual love. For this reason, he could run faster than Peter and he drew the correct conclusion from the grave clothes which he saw in the tomb. He himself a model believer, he became not only the authority for his community for the material contained in this gospel, but an example to them. They were to believe as he believed; their relationship to Jesus was to be that of friends, not servants. The question of his identity is still debated, but this is of small importance compared with his significance. Usually, he is identified with John. He represents all faithful disciples of Jesus through all ages of the church. Their loving intimacy with Jesus ensures that though they do not see Jesus physically, they believe without seeing.