

St. Columba's Episcopal Church
Easter Sunday – April 20, 2025
John 20:1-18
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Preparation

At the beginning of the season of Lent – the forty days set aside by the church for preparation for today, Easter Day – I prepared a selection of readings and questions for you to ponder each day. The readings represented wisdom gleaned from a wide variety of sources ancient to modern, from several branches of Christianity and from other faith traditions. All this was to help you prepare for today, our yearly celebration of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Mary Magdalene was a Jewish woman who traveled with Jesus as one of his followers. The Gospels tell us that she and other women provided and cared for Jesus and his disciples during his years of ministry. *Preparation.*

You know about the great trouble Jesus endured in the last days of his life. After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, hailed as King by joyous crowds, he walked a very dark road. Betrayed by his disciple Judas Iscariot, arrested, mocked, beaten, accused of blasphemy by the religious leaders, crowds shouting “crucify him!” and finally, a terrible death. All through these dark days some of Jesus’ friends and followers stayed close to him. Mary Magdalene was one. She loved Jesus dearly and followed him all the way to the cross, where she stood with Jesus’ mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved. *Preparation.*

Jesus died on Friday afternoon and his body was placed in the tomb on Friday before sunset. In keeping with their Jewish religious tradition, the disciples of Jesus observed the holy feast of Passover from Friday evening through Saturday. Attending to the dead was not permitted during Passover. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of her Lord as soon as she possibly could – so early on Easter morning that it was still dark – to attend to his body as a final act of love. *Preparation.*

And so, after all this preparation as a faithful disciple of Jesus, Mary Magdalene came to be in that holy place at that holy time, the very first of his followers to see the risen Lord. She was there to hear him call her by name, “Mary!” His voice! Her “Teacher”!

The day will come for each of us when Jesus will call us by name. We live now in faith, trusting that this day will come. We live now in hope, waiting for this day to come. We live now in a time of preparation for that day. How are we to prepare?

Each of us is called to prepare for that day in our own unique way, a way shaped by the particular gifts and blessings God has given us and by the circumstances of our lives. But there are clear patterns of preparation, patterns of discipleship. Growing in the knowledge and love of God. Growing in active love of our neighbors and ourselves, recognizing that all people are beloved children of God. Being compassionately present and caring for people in need. Being good stewards of God's good creation and its creatures. Acting with kindness and generosity, building one another up in love, in the church and in the world. These are some of the patterns of discipleship we learn from scripture, the witness of the church, and one another.

Now is the time of preparation for the day when the Lord will call us by name. May we so prepare in the time given to us that on that day our loving hearts will leap for joy – Easter joy – and we will be ready to begin our new life – new and unending life – with our Lord and our God.

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