

**Sunday 12 April 2020 - online worship from Knox Church, Dunedin, New Zealand
preached by Kerry Enright – for Easter Day**

It can be accessed from the Knox Church YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYksSjG0If00NeogNIGs7A>.

or from the Knox Church website – <https://knoxchurch.net/>

“Why do you weep?” a sermon based on John 20:11-18

There are times I proclaim boldly the profound impact of the resurrection. And I want to do that today, but perhaps more intimately, more personally. I am a person who cries, and I am often surprised by what prompts it. Dramatic hakas, the queen’s speeches, emotional movies, relief after immense effort. I have cried in church meetings, uttering sounds I didn’t know were in me. I have cried when a project into which I put great effort, came to nothing, and I wrestled with my frailties. I confess that up to about 25 years ago, I was not given to crying much. But then for about 10 years I attended to complaints of sexual misconduct in the national church. It was my practice, that when I received a complaint, I would shut my office door and read what people had written. The tears would fall. Accounts of how what had been precious and life-giving had been taken from people. I was drawn into grief. Only as I look back do I realise how much those experiences changed me, and I believe, how God changed me. So I come to this story, and I feel its pathos.

Mary Magdalene stood weeping outside the tomb. Just days before she had been at the foot of the cross and had seen Jesus die. She knew that Joseph and Nicodemus had wrapped his body with spices and in linen cloths, and that they had placed him in the tomb in the garden. So now, days later she had come to that tomb. As if his death wasn’t enough, now they had taken his body. The angels sitting where the body had been placed, ask Mary – “Why are you weeping?” Now those angels were either emotionally unintelligent, or this question is put here for a reason. And given that Easter can be popularly thought of as a time of unbounded joy and relentless positivity, it is a strange question to intrude, and yet it is asked twice of Mary Magdalene. Which suggests that Easter Day is the day for asking it of us: Why do you weep? And why do you weep at this time?

There are people under considerable strain at present. People whose businesses have closed or are hanging by a thread. People who have already been made redundant or can see it on the horizon. Families under immense strain. My sister told me of times, at the end of World War Two, when she would go to bed and hear our mother weeping in a darkened front room of the house. Other soldiers had returned but our mother had heard no news about our father.

Easter Day invites us into that front room, and to every such room, where people grieve and where people grieve in anticipation of what might happen. "They have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid him." Not just the loss, the not-knowing, the uncertainty, the fear of what might be. Jesus came to her looking so ordinary, that she mistook him for a gardener. He comes that way still, plain, so camouflaged that we miss him entirely unless we have a sense of who he is and what he does and how he sounds. Then Jesus says Mary's name and she recognises him. Then he says – do not hold on to me. Well, she had let him go once before and look what happened. Why now? Because the life, the irrepressible life, the overflowing love, that pulsed in Christ, was for more than Mary Magdalene. Christ was for every person, in every room, with every one that weeps.

Sometimes the spirit of resurrection is victory and triumph and thine be the glory risen conquering son. We will sing in that spirit at the end of this service. But sometimes the spirit of resurrection is in encountering the tender presence of a loving Christ, someone so ordinary as to be mistaken for a gardener, so quiet as to be noticed only when he calls our name. Sometimes the victory of Easter is being given the strength to attend to the question - why do you weep. Over what do you weep. In order that we may know the deep life called eternal life. The resurrection is only the beginning. There is more to come, more life, more love, more justice, more praying. And being able to say, with Mary, however timorously or confidently, I have seen the Lord. So the news spreads. And the prayer grows. And the communion multiplies. Which leads into our prayer for others, and then to communion.

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made known in Jesus, given in grace*



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