

# The wandering heart finds peace

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Psalm 118:1-2;14-24; Isaiah 25:6-9; Mark 16:1-8, John 20:1-18

Rev Jean Shannon

I would have been one of the crowd standing and staring and horror and fascination. How could humans do such a thing? Will God save him? It is a slow agonising death reserved only for the worst offenders. Could you kill a movement by a slow death that you couldn't kill with a sword?

I would have been one that wandered away. Taking my wandering heart with me. There was nothing for me in Jerusalem. Home at least offered the comfort of routine.

I would have been the one who couldn't believe the delusional women blinded by their grief and the task before them. The hopeless hoping beyond hope that somehow God would keep his promise.

I am the one with the wandering heart that drifts from church to church hoping beyond hoping that God will speak to me but never returning to listen.

How do we know we would be brave or strong enough to roll back that stone? How do we roll back that heavy barrier and let light into the dark corners of our hearts: The place where we grow bitterness and disappointment.

When we stare at the empty rags of the world around us, blood stained and torn, how do we not become bitter people?

We start with ourselves.

Could you, place your hand on your heart and ask it "What hurt you? Because no one is born bitter<sup>1</sup>. Bitterness happens when the pain and sorrow of life overtake us so much that in defence, we beat life to the punch. Because *assuming* everything is bad, gone to hell in a handcart.. and bad things will always happen... feels less vulnerable than having our hopes dashed again. Better to just not hope at all and then make everyone in our lives suffer us. But **I am hopeful**. Defiantly so. There are a million forms of unpleasantness out there, it's true. But what is also true is that there are always more forms of love.

There is more love than bad ... if we dare to look.

Famished meals and lavish meals to love...

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<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from Nadia Boltz-Webber in *The Corners* published 23 March 24

Foods to love. Dogs to love. People to love. Sunrises to love. Pizza to love. Little jagged pieces of our hearts to love. Quirks of others to love. Literature to love. Bad jokes to love. Flowers to love. Kittens to love...(call for more)

It is no accident that the last meal claims to have happened at Passover. Passover is the story of the liberation of the people from Egypt. Liberation! Freedom – but not without cost. It came with years enduring the hardships of the desert. It came with doubt and starvation; wrong turns and moments of forgetting God. It came with wandering aimlessly and wondering. It came with the pain of saying goodbye to Marion and others who died along the way never seeing the promised land. It came with a generation born who had no memories of the old country or the old ways. It came with confusion, suffering and pain. ...as freedom always does.

But who rolled back that rock?

Who let the light in?

What was left behind?

The linen wrappings – not shed like a snakeskin but carefully rolled up and put away. A conscious act to put aside: to tidy up before going to a higher place.

Every Easter, you are given the opportunity to put aside the rocks that hold your bitterness and emerge into the sunshine, or at least let the sunshine in.

You don't have to have the strength – just the courage. God rolls back the stone.

Easter is a time of renewal. We say "Jesus rises" but what we mean is hope rises – like dough in a hot cross bun. We sprinkle it with metaphors like chrysalis and butterflies. We salt it with experience - just as we re-live the horror and sadness of Passion week - and we coat it in chocolate because chocolate makes everything better.

But what we are really saying is that a wandering heart can find peace when it becomes a wondering heart. When we open ourselves to breath-taking possibilities and warm ourselves in the rays of God's enduring love.

No one said liberation or resurrection was easy. The Easter story is confronting.

Like Mary, we have look in the dark holes that riddle our hearts. We have to bend low and look into the dark and dank places, the kind of places where goodness goes to die. The kind of places that feel like a tomb for love. Imagine Mary's consternation,

the last thing she expected was hope. Certainly not there in a tomb where she had come to wash a body with tears and oil.

“And is this not the way that new life sometimes comes to us? Before the full-blown blossom is just the hint of green, the fragile green edge of new growth erupting through blackened earth. Before the certainty of a new stage of life just a hint of hope in the anxious space of what has been taken or given away. Before the joy of a new life in your arms just the strange sickness in the morning, a shift of gravity with increasing size...”<sup>2</sup>

So as we go blinking into the sunshine of this new day, our wandering heart goes before us to Galilee, there you will see him. Long ago our world was changed and is still changing today for resurrection does change everything. It is not simply life again but life as we never knew it. Life beyond our imagination. “for resurrection is not simply a new thing but is a new thing that changes us but returns us to where we came from to be different in the same place.”<sup>3</sup>

Take your wondering heart, at peace, and pick up your bag of chocolate-coated love and spread the news. Love endures longer than anything else. It is founded on God who experienced life on earth and *still* embraced humankind.

Christ has Risen!

Amen

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<sup>2</sup> Rev Sue, *Companions on the way*, 27 March 2024

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*