

The women tell the story. The women were there first - because they were busy with the 'women's work' - the caring, the tending, the 'being present' in the early morning hours - work that required courage and devotion and compassion. The two Mary's, Joanna and the others find the tomb disturbed and Jesus' body gone. They endure a startling audience with two dazzling strangers. They overcome their fear and listen to the messenger and they remember Jesus' words.

The women were first, and the men, being men, don't believe them. An 'idle tale' they say - with all the accompanying noises of doubt and dismissal. The text says Peter was different - that he got up and ran to the tomb. A quick glance tells him that there is nothing in it but the burial cloth, and he returns home, 'amazed at what had happened.'

But what HAD happened? Peter saw no angelic visitors - had no resurrection encounter with Jesus - the tomb was empty, and now he had proof of that. And still, he is amazed at what had happened...

I think what happened for Peter is that he begins to learn a lesson of faith. In a society where power and knowledge and almost everything else of value was ascribed to adult men, Peter has been given a lesson in God's equality. Sure, he had been running with Jesus for a few years, and Jesus did model a very egalitarian approach to day to day life, but this is big news, and Peter has just confirmed that the women were first in line for it - and they were telling the truth. And while equality is not something we usually celebrate on the feast of the Resurrection, it is certainly part of the fabric of the new heaven and new earth - the life abundant - the promised kingdom of God that is so loudly announced by, among other things, an empty tomb.

What happened on that first Easter morning is the disruption of the earthly power structures. The rule makers and law keepers have been beaten at their own game. The worst punishment they could think of - death on a cross - now holds no fear, because the tomb is empty and the women remember the lessons Jesus offered and believed that things have changed - radically, and for the better. The women, suddenly and with divine clarity, begin to see the world differently.

Peter and the boys will get there, but they're men; it takes longer. They will need to puzzle it out - to think it through. Men don't trust their hunches where the miraculous is concerned. Men want proof - men need a decisive argument, or a compelling reason. Two thousand and some years on, we are all caught by that trap - we want to know for sure. If that is where you find yourself today, I'll suggest that being amazed at what had happened is a good starting point.

Amazement opens up new perspectives. Amazement tickles the brain into accepting new ideas. The unfolding story of God's revelation to humanity - some of which is captured in Scripture - is full of amazing moments. Our jaws drop - we are rendered speechless, and (oddly enough) when we stop talking - stop trying to convince ourselves in one direction or another - the still, small voice of God might actually break through.

Peter found that the incredible story the women shared might just be true. He had seen for himself the horror of Jesus death - and now he must question everything that he saw. The tomb is empty - something as final and fundamental as death has somehow been shifted - altered - what now would he make of the world?

Well, the amazement of that first Easter Day would prove transformative. Because once you believe that the world is changed, you are free to change the world. To preach amazement - to proclaim the love of God - to act in every area of life as though God was in control - and God cared enough to intervene. Amazement birthed a movement that became the Christian Church, and while it's far from a perfect expression of the lasting love of God, we do get it right once in a while.

Be amazed this Easter morning. Amazed by love wherever you find it - amazed by beauty, amazed by joy. Be amazed that this 'idle tale' sustains a faithful movement of compassion, justice and loving-kindness - a movement that nurtures us and calms our fears and brings us hope. And in amazement, in the light of the risen Jesus, go and change the world.