

A New Day Dawns



The sun is beginning to appear over the brow of the hill. A new day dawns. Perhaps we can imagine Mary Magdalene and one or two other women, full of grief, arriving at the tomb on the first Easter morning.

Obtaining this photo took many mornings of going out in the dark with my camera and walking east along the road outside our house. Every morning was different. At times there was a fog or thick clouds which hid the sun, or I was a little too early or too late. Once I thought I had everything just right, but when I looked at the photo I had taken, there was a mysterious flash on one side. As the days went on, the place where the sun appeared, gradually changed until it was no longer rising in the centre of the road. At this point I gave up!

When I later reflected on my efforts, I realised that any photo that showed at least some sunlight appearing would have done. Fog, clouds, the sun rising in different places, or a flash in the photo did not matter. I wanted my picture of the sun rising to be just how I saw it in my mind, but even a little dawn light reflected on a power pole would have been enough. Every morning in different ways the light of the sun overcomes the darkness of night and a new day begins.

When we read all the stories of Jesus appearing to his disciples, we are aware of how differently he revealed his resurrection life and light to them.

When Jesus came to Mary, he needed not only to talk to her, but call her by name to pierce through the fog of her grief and enable her to witness to his resurrection.

Other grieving disciples were afraid, hiding in an upstairs room. Jesus came to them through a locked door and showed them his wounds. They had to face their fear of ghosts, as well as of capture, on their way to faith in Jesus.

The beloved disciple only had to see the empty tomb to believe that Jesus had risen. It was enough for him but not for Peter who was with him. Peter experienced grief, fear and also guilt which blocked his relationship with Jesus. Later Jesus invited Peter to walk with him along the beach. This journey gradually allowed a distraught Peter to accept his guilt, forgiveness from Jesus and a call to future work.

Thomas believed when he was invited to actually touch the wounds of Jesus. To be told by others that Jesus was alive, or even to see Jesus himself was not enough.

For the travellers to Emmaus, who unknowingly walked with Jesus discussing the Scriptures, it took the action of Jesus sitting at their table, taking bread, breaking it and giving it to them to eat, before light dawned for them!

If we consider the two men who were not disciples, yet believed in Jesus when they saw him dying, we find that both the criminal crucified beside him and the centurion recognised truth and goodness in Jesus' behaviour. The criminal 'saw' Jesus' kingship, and the Roman centurion proclaimed Jesus' divinity in the best way he knew.

All these 1st century people were reached by Jesus' love and care in different ways, determined by their states of mind, their backgrounds and characters. They were gradually brought out of their darkness into the light of faith.

For us today, in 21st century Australia, Jesus still communicates in ways that assist each of us to respond to and welcome his presence and guidance in our lives.

Grief was the overwhelming emotion that most of Jesus' followers felt after his crucifixion. It is an emotion we all have experienced in response to the loss of someone or something we cared about deeply. It may have been the loss of a loved one who had given us life in a loving relationship, or the loss of something else such as our work, our home, our pet, or our health. Grieving is a painful time when we may become angry, want to blame someone, or try to blot it all out of our memory. When we are overcome by our grief we might go alone to a place we know—and weep. If we are able, in spite of our sorrow, to notice the need of another, we may hear Jesus call us by name.

It seems that it is particularly when we are broken by grief, fear, guilt, or can somehow recognise truth and goodness in unlikely places, that we become open enough for a crucified/risen Jesus to enter us with new light and life. God, for some reason, often works in this way.

On the first Easter morning, and every morning, different people in different places become aware of the sun rising in different ways if they are open to the light.

Jesus communicates his presence to us in ways that are right for us. We each experience different aspects of the same Jesus. What is common for us all is the love the risen Jesus has for each of us, and his desire for us to embrace resurrection life with him and in him, here and now.

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