

**“SEEING THROUGH THE BLUR”**

*John 20:1-18*

Meditation by Mack Dennis, Pastor

Like Mary Magdalene, we, too, stand in a garden tomb at daybreak. There can be no denying this garden is sacred not only because of its budding flowers and hewn stones, but also because it holds the remains of our loved ones, and there are more names engraved on these plaques than when we stood here last. Just as Mary experienced, we stand in only as much light as the dawn gives. The sun has broken the surface of the horizon, but has not yet risen high enough to dispel the shadows. No, we stand in this between space, in the already and the not yet, the now and then, shuffling as best we know how across the threshold from a world where final death is a given, to a world where eternal life is a promise. Like the blind man Jesus healed, at first, he could only see in a blur—people looked like walking trees—until Jesus healed him completely.

When Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” John says, “The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth” (Jn 11:44). Can you see him, a man dead four days, trying to walk with feet bound, hands strapped together, entire head wrapped in strips of cloth? He was dead. And now he’s alive. But he still can’t see through the blur of this shroud of wrappings. He was dead. And now he’s alive. But all he can see is light filtering through the strips of cloth that have been soaked in perfumes and spices and have since begun hardening in place. He was dead. And now he’s alive. But all he can see are the shadows of hands attending him now, Mary and Martha’s adrenaline-stoked efforts to peel away this mask of death.

Now Mary Magdalene, the tender heart, stands weeping. As she weeps, she stoops to look into the tomb, seeing through the blur of her tears two angels, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying. They ask, “Woman, why are you weeping?” And she lets it all out. “They’ve taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve laid him.” This final insult—the authorities couldn’t leave Jesus in peace, even in death. No, they had to pile grief upon grief, and deny her the ability to cradle his body one last time, to anoint him with myrrh and aloe, to say goodbye. Then, looking up, she sees Jesus standing there. But even though she now stands looking upon the first fruit of new creation, she doesn’t recognize through the blur of her tears that it’s Jesus. In fact, she supposes him to be the gardener, and suggests he might have moved the body. Which tells you she is disoriented. What kind of gardener goes around moving dead bodies?

Paul says, “Presently, we see through a mirror, dimly.” In his time, mirrors were made of steel, hard to polish. You could only see yourself in obscurity. In such a mirror, you would look like a riddle even to yourself. To look into such a mirror would be to see in a blur. ...But then we will see face to face. Now, in the liminal light of dawn, we know only in part. But then we will know fully, and will be fully known.

Dear friends, you who stand in the present, who see, yes, but only in part, through a blur of tears, hear the Good News: though the shadows have not yet been dispersed, though our sight is blurred, the One who has defeated death stands in our midst, and sees us with divine clarity. He knows our inward parts, he has intimate knowledge of the depths of our secret heart, he counts every hair on our head, he knows the intricate color display of our irises, he can retrace the pattern of our fingerprints from memory, he knows the shape of the nape of our necks, and the arches of our feet, he preserves our tears, and recalls even our forgotten memories.

And he remembers our name. He calls her by name. “Mary!” Can you hear him calling yours? Though we see him only through the blur of our tears, our grief, our anger and frustration, our doubts and our fears...the Risen Jesus sees us with divine clarity, and calls us by name...

*The voice we hear, falling on our ear, the Son of God discloses.* So, we walk through this garden tomb, in this first light, seeing through a blur, but nevertheless...seen. Knowing only in part, but fully known. And called by name, into the clear...

