

## **Among the dead**

Luke 24:1-6

March 31, 2013

We begin our Easter service this way: in dim light, with no candles, no music, no flowers; with black cloths draped on the cross and altar, pulpit and lectern; black, the color of death; black, the color of mourning; black, the color of emptiness.

We begin our Easter service this way because that's how Easter begins: in emptiness, in mourning, among the dead.

Very early on Sunday morning, a group of women, followers of Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, another Mary, and others, came to the stone tomb where they had seen Jesus' body laid late on Friday afternoon.

They came looking for him, looking for his body, among the dead. They came to dress the body with spices and perfumes as was their custom. It was the one thing they had left to do for him before the awful reality of his absence and their emptiness fully set in.

It was there, among the dead, in the midst of their grief, that they heard the news. And that's where we too hear the news: among the dead.

We hear the news among the dead we remember still and mourn still: Don Darrow and Gloria Remhof and Bill McMurray, Elaine Mast and Carol Maurer and Bud Goos, Betty Dalton and Noreen Fischer and Mary Dams and Jim Damon and Harold Brock, my father and Lynne's father and your father, your mother, your husband, your wife, your son, your daughter, your sister, your brother, our friend.

We hear the news among the dead places in our lives: broken relationships, not difficult or hurtful or frustrating, but broken, dead; lost opportunities; irreversible mistakes; stubborn sins; bitter hearts; hardened hearts; despairing hearts; deadened hearts.

We hear the news among the dead places in our world: permanent war; ineffective governments; people desperately hungry and desperately poor; people persecuted and tortured and killed for no better reason than their ethnicity or place of origin or faith; a planet exploited for its resources and misappropriated as a garbage dump; an earth, our home, ignored as species die and the climate is changed and resources vital to all life are despoiled and destroyed.

We hear the news among the dead places in our spirits: places no love can reach, places no therapy can revive; places where hope is dormant and belief is long dead.

It is here, among the dead, that we too hear the news: he is not here; he has been raised.

This is the story, the Easter story, as the gospel of Luke tells it ...

*Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, so they went in; but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They stood there puzzled about this, when suddenly two men in bright shining clothes stood by them. Full of fear, the women bowed down to the ground, as the men said to them, "Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here; he has been raised."*