

Grief Relief

'Let the dead bury their own dead. You go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.' (LK 9:60)

Resurrection flies in the face of the sorrows we nurture and the Jesus we tend to conform to the image of our sorrows.

Jesus on the other hand broke the back of grief by assuming it at Calvary. If the Gospel accounts of His rising are true, He does not tolerate for long our weeping at His Cross and tomb. He simply has too much for us to do. He conquered death and wants us to join in the dance of new life, something strange and unsettling for us who are more acquainted with grief than glory. We who mope need the marvel of Easter.

Take Mary Magdalene. Her whole life was bound up in Jesus, in an intimate bond of love with the One who delivered her then died. Her grief over His departure kept her glued to the tomb; sadness slowed her down, and compelled her to wait there. Even then, she could not recognize Him when He, raised and radiant, appeared to her (JN 20: 10-18).

When she did recognize Him, her tendency may have been to grasp. We like Mary tend to make Jesus in our own image, according to the old vision and version of how things were. Mary wept for what used to be with Jesus; when He appeared to her post-crucifixion, everything had changed. That requires a deft hand and heart to all who welcome His resurrection. 'Don't hold onto Me, Mary!' were Jesus' comforting words (v.17).

We need to hear those words as well. Life is full of disappointments that can become big as tombs unless we fix our eyes on the One who lives and yet who is never quite within our grasp, always free to show us the Life waiting to emerge from our little deaths. That means letting go of the past, especially the past now made perfect in our deceptive memories as an antidote for today's uncertainty. We need to let go of the past in order to hear Jesus now.

Our certainty is Christ Resurrected. He rents our veil of tears over and over until joy supersedes sorrow and enables us to face hardship with expectancy. Easter's marvel? Jesus makes us more alive than before through every strange twist and turn. Death is not the end. The end is Life.