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EASTER SUNDAY C, 2019  
Luke 24:1-12 "What Happened at Easter"

This story of Easter centers on three women, remembered explicitly by name:  
Mary Magdalene and another Mary who was James' mother, and Joanna.

These are the women who stayed on to the end: all the way from Galilee.  
They were at the burial, noted the place of the tomb,  
determined to finish a more proper care of the body  
than had been managed by the men as sabbath was approaching.  
They were on a mission to bring something to an end.

And their intentions were interrupted, the tomb already opened  
and the body gone, and an admonition from messengers  
not to look for the living Jesus in this place of death.  
How would this impact them? For one thing,  
they were not filled with joy: oh good, Jesus is okay now,  
he's gone on to heaven. Let's go tell the others.  
No that wasn't it, and that is not what they were told.

Here they are at the edge of something entirely new,  
that Jesus is alive, so now what's going on.  
They are reminded that Jesus spoke of this moment,  
how he would be handed over, executed, and then  
beyond that work of violence, he would rise up.  
The women, as the Gospel says, remembered his words.  
They took it in: powerful forces in religion and politics were overturned.

When they bring this to the disciples in town there is mention  
of "others who were with them."  
I like to think they might have taken a little time together,  
perhaps looking for a quiet home they knew,  
the house at Bethany, for example,  
a listening ear, a little water, a breathing spell.

Along the way then, opening up their memories,  
and telling what they saw and heard, sharing it with other women,  
surely they would look back and find how it all makes sense to them.

All along Jesus had been suggesting a change in priorities,  
a new authority, a call to trust God directly, God's way of life,  
coming up, very near, what he called the Kingdom.

It's like Jesus saw all along that the problem is not Rome,  
the problem is not the Jewish law or the Sanhedrin or the priests.  
The problem is not Syria or Egypt.  
The problem is the human heart, the violence that can be hidden there;  
the set up that disqualifies some people, the inequity we get used to,  
but really it grinds you down  
and gets inside and inspires people to lash out in return.  
And Jesus stood his ground against that temptation.  
This vision has been vindicated now, and that's the risen presence.

You can imagine how the women would be sensitive to this,  
a discipleship now of equals, we with one another,  
and the women with the men.  
We're in a new place.  
Later generations will come to see that this risen consciousness  
happens as we celebrate it, as we share the bread and cup  
as we tell the stories, and let go of our fears.

After all, he is risen; he is not here. But we are here.  
I've always thought a powerful Renewal Program for any parish  
would be to post over the doors some Sunday,  
"He is not here; he is Risen . . . Remember what he said;  
you are the witnesses."  
What a Rite of Dismissal it would be!  
And at first there'd be fear, and astonishment,  
the men would be slow to catch on,  
and then small communities would form,  
a sense of the Kingdom becoming real,  
and a new courage about facing the world that we live in. Seeing it.

Until finally we would bump into him on the road for real,  
or at the dinner table or meeting room,  
or in the streets among the homeless, or the emergency room,  
the field hospital that is our broken community being made whole again.  
The powers of this world overturned, surprising times:  
He is not here, but we are here encountering him where we are,  
and then we'd come back, Sunday after Sunday,  
to tell our own stories to one another.  
We would explain how our hearts are a guide, burning within us.  
This is what happens, isn't it. As you know.

Happy Easter then.  
May your witness be a grace to everybody.