



Blessed Be

April 2020

Welcome to our Easter edition of Blessed Be. Thank you for your continued support of Blessed Be. Our next edition will be out in August. If you have something you would like to share with us, please feel free to contact me at: helenmacauley@gmail.com

*We begin this edition with two offerings from **Elizabeth Lee**:*

Reflecting with Mary of Magdalene in John 20:1-18

It was still dark on the first day of the week when you, Mary of Magdala, came to the tomb. You saw the stone had been moved away. Had you peered inside the tomb at this stage? Did you know the tomb was empty? One would suspect so, but John does not explicitly say.

You stayed, stayed at the empty tomb. And I hear you invite me to do the same. ‘Do not return to the fear-filled room - not yet. Trust the desire to linger, to wait, to seek and to search, because what you are searching for you will find. And don’t move on too quickly. Let the disciples return home, but there is more wisdom in these first ten verses for you. Stay with them.’

I just want to cry, to cry for all those who are hurting – for all those hurting as a result of the bushfires in Australia, the floods in Indonesia, the locust plagues in Africa, the wars in Syria, the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, our weeping planet. And so, I return to the scene at the tomb on Easter Sunday morning.

Mary, you returned to the tomb while it was still dark, at the first opportunity. You returned to your place of loss and grief, to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. You saw the empty tomb. You knew something had changed. You sought out others, leaders in the community, to share your dismay. When Peter and the disciple Jesus loved arrived, they confirmed your story. The tomb was indeed empty. But then they left for home to confirm it to the others, returning fearful to a place of seeming safety - in a locked room. Yet, Mary, you stayed, you lingered in the place of emptiness, confusion, loss, not knowing.

I wonder how it was for you Mary? Coming across the empty tomb? Telling Peter and John about it? Having them come and check things out, then take off back home. You stayed, lingered, I can only imagine, disconcerted and upset, confused and grieving, possibly even angry? How could anyone do this, take away the body of the one you love? And those men – had they believed you? Probably not until they saw with their own eyes. Your word was not given the respect it deserved. And then they leave. No questions asked of you, no interest in your concerns? But maybe that was for the best - allowing you to be alone in your grief. After all that is why you came to the tomb before dawn. Mary, you stayed, lingered, in that place of pain, loss and emptiness. For how long we do not know. You seem unflustered by the appearance of the angels; in fact, they conversed with you. You don’t seem to wait for their reply to your question - where is he gone?. Instead you seem to seek answers from anyone around, the gardener - you are desperately seeking the dead, tortured body of Jesus.

And through this crazy search, Jesus finds you. At first, you do not recognise him. But then he calls your name. You stop and cling to him. Following his instructions, you return to the others and share your news. You encountered the Risen One! As I linger in places of pain, suffering, death may I do so knowing that this is where I, too, will encounter the Risen One.

The Magdalene's Blessing

You hardly imagined
standing here,
everything you ever loved
suddenly returned to you,
looking you in the eye
and calling your name.

And now
you do not know
how to abide this ache
in the centre
of your chest,
where a door
slams shut
and swings open
at the same time,
turning on the hinge
of your aching
and hopeful heart.

I tell you,
this is not a banishment
from the garden.

This is an invitation,
a choice,
a threshold,
a gate.

This is your life
calling to you
from a place
you could never
have dreamed,
but now that you
have glimpsed its edge,
you cannot imagine
choosing any other way.

So let the tears come
as anointing,
as consecration,
and then
let them go.

Let this blessing
gather itself around you.

Let it give you
what you will need
for this journey.

You will not remember
the words—
they do not matter.

All you need to remember
is how it sounded
when you stood
in the place of death
and heard the living
call your name.

Jan Richardson in Circle of Grace 2015.

Now a change of focus with an extract by **Wendell Berry** which **Tricia Gemmel** submitted in the wake of the bushfires:

I know how to draw the line only where it is easy to draw. It is easy – it is even a luxury – to deny oneself the use of a television set, and I zealously practise that form of self-denial...It is plain to me that the line ought to be drawn without fail wherever it can be drawn easily. And it ought to be easy (though many do not find it so) to refuse to buy what one does not need...

And yet, if we are ever again to have a world fit and pleasant for little children, we are surely going to have to draw the line where it is *not* easily drawn. We are going to have to learn to give up things that we have learned (in only a few years, after all) to ‘need’. I am not an optimist; I am afraid that I won’t live long enough to escape my bondage to the machines. Nevertheless, on every day left to me I will search my mind and circumstances for the means of escape. And I am not without hope. I know a man who, in the age of chainsaws, went right on cutting his wood with a handsaw and an axe. He was a healthier and saner man than I am. I shall let his memory trouble my thoughts.

Feminism, the Body, and the Machine, 1989

From **Jillian Morrison**, “a couple of quotes that put a smile on my face”:

If we are too busy to be kind, we are too busy –**Allen Lokos**

Kindness does wonderful things to a face – **Dixie Doyle**

Tolerance does not mean indifference or a grudging acceptance of others. It is a way of life based on mutual understanding and respect for others, and the belief that global diversity is to be embraced, not feared -
UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

We have the choice to try for a new world every day, to tell what we know of the truth every day, to take small actions every day - **A. L. Kennedy**

From **Sheila Hawthorn** we have firstly a prayer by **Rabbi Jack Reimer**:

We cannot merely pray to you, O God

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end war:
for we know that you have made the world in a way that we must find our own path to peace,
within ourselves and with our neighbour.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end starvation:
for you have already given us resources with which to feed the entire world,
if we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to root out prejudice:
for you have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people,
if we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end despair:
for you have already given us the power to clear away slums and to give hope,
if we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end disease:
for you have already given us great minds to search out cures and healing,
if we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to you instead, O God,
for strength, determination and will power to do, instead of just to pray,
to become, instead of merely to wish.

*And also a poem by **Andrew Bullen S.J.**, which applies to the scattered Grail community as well as it does to the Jesuit, and is especially apt in a world battling with COVID 19:*

Ignatius and the Stars

Naming the stars is counting blessings,
Is praise and thanksgiving.
Watching them move is slow
as prayer, the rhythm
of the breathing of God our Lord.
STARS are seeds of LIGHT
sown in darkness.
My companions are scattered all over the world,
where each can see the sky.
However apart – we are together.

*Finally, from **Alison Healey**, **Clarence Jordan's** understanding of the meaning of the Resurrection*

The resurrection of Jesus was simply God's unwillingness to take our 'no' for an answer.
He raised Jesus, not as an invitation to us to come to heaven when we die,
but as a declaration that he himself has now established permanent, eternal residence here on earth.
He is standing beside us, strengthening us in this life.
The good news of the resurrection of Jesus is not that we shall die and go home to be with him,
but that he has risen and comes home with us,
bringing all his hungry, naked, thirsty, sick prisoner brothers with him.

*Source: **Sojourners, Verse and Voice**, from Clarence Jordan, Baptist New Testament scholar, founder of Koinonia Farm, Georgia, USA (1912-69)*

