

Perhaps you've seen the unreleased Gary Larson cartoon with a haggard, disheveled-looking Jesus pouring himself a cup of coffee and thinking to himself, "I wonder what time it is? I feel like I've been dead for three days." I love it in part because I always love to envision Biblical figures as relatable, ordinary people. Being honest about how I would think or feel in a situation helps me connect with the story. And to be honest, I would not muster the faith and devotion that "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" display in Matthew's Gospel.

They had lingered by the tomb even after Joseph of Arimathea rolled the stone into place. Everyone else had long scattered. And they returned at the earliest possible moment. Mark's Gospel says they came bearing spices, intending to anoint Jesus's body, but Matthew says they simply "went to see the tomb." They needed one more moment with Jesus, and they needed it so badly that they ignored the general dangers to women traveling alone and the specific dangers to followers of Jesus. I've lost people whom I miss terribly, but I personally don't get much out of visiting their burial places, so I certainly wouldn't put myself at risk to do so. But then, none of them ever cast out seven demons from me, like Jesus had done for Mary Magdalene. Could she have feared that without Jesus, they might be emboldened to come back and try again?

They did not fear the angel, even though his appearance made Roman soldiers pass out. And they did not fear his and Jesus's request to tell the rest of the disciples what had happened, which we should take very seriously. From the very beginning, Christianity spread by word of mouth. As Peter said, Jesus "commanded us to preach to the people," yet so many mainline Christians today refuse to share their faith, invite people to church, or point out to others how God is acting, and then wonder why mainline churches aren't growing. Be like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. They worshiped Jesus, and then they told others where they could see him.

And why did Jesus insist on making his friends schlep all the way back to Galilee before he could see them? John and Luke describe the risen Christ appearing to the disciples in and around Jerusalem. Does Matthew see the return to Galilee as a homecoming, a well-earned retreat into familiarity and peace after the horror and heartbreak of the Passion? Is Jesus saying, in effect, "Let's blow this taco stand"? As the kids would say. Well, no, because Matthew's Gospel makes it dramatically clear that the return to Galilee is the inauguration of the full realization of Jesus's mission, no longer limited to Israel, but now to all nations. In a sense, it's the resurrection of his mission: not a mere continuation but a profound expansion.

But first they had to get there. And before they could decide to go, they had to believe the women. And before they could believe the women, their souls had to be healed. Remember, at this point, all they knew was that Jesus had been arrested and executed; the disciples were despondent, scared, and hiding.

Lots of good sermons have been preached about the power of the resurrection. I'm just trying to live up to Peter's and Paul's examples. As St. Paul points out, Jesus's

resurrection foretells our own: "...we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." And knowing that death will not get the last word for us, in turn gives us hope and courage to do what God calls us to do. But I have come to believe that there is another, much more subtle way in which the power of Jesus's resurrection changes us.

All adults should be able to relate to that cartoon of Jesus, and to the disciples in their Good Friday moment, because all of us have been wounded and traumatized in one way or another. And as surely as injuries to the body can leave permanent damage, injuries to our souls don't always heal, and can even leave parts of us dead inside.

Now, resurrection is not healing. Next week we'll hear Jesus invite Thomas to touch the wounds in his hands and his side. Resurrection does not undo what has been done. Jesus will not "fix" you or solve all your problems. But just as resurrection changed Jesus's body into something better, something that could no longer be corrupted or damaged, changed his wounds into a teaching tool, the power of the resurrection is not just a promise for our future, but is at work in souls today. I see resurrection at work in every instance when wounds and traumas make a person more understanding, compassionate, and empathetic. While there is truth in the observation that "hurt people hurt people," that is neither universal nor inevitable. Like Jesus, hurt people can bless people, too.

Such a transformation can happen without our understanding or even our awareness, just as the eyewitnesses to Jesus's resurrection did not witness the moment itself, a moment of profound intimacy between the Father and the Son, and I have no doubt, the Holy Spirit. They had to catch on and catch up to what God had done, seeing Jesus after he emerged alive from the tomb. They began to understand what had happened even later, after some of them "ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

But I do not think it coincidental that Matthew juxtaposes the women's brave decisions and the disciples' transformation. I think his way of telling the story shows us that human beings have a role to play in the unfolding of the resurrection on earth before we experience it fully in heaven. By *choosing* to love Jesus boldly, and *choosing* to proclaim his resurrection faithfully, the two Marys ensured a great new phase of salvation history, connecting many others to the power of the risen Jesus, on down to us. Their faithfulness and boldness remind me of Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh and ensured the survival and propagation of their entire nation, not only in their own time, but down to the present day.

If we can relate to Jesus's weakness, we can also relate to his strength. If we can recoil from his death, surely we can embrace the new life he offers us. When we act out of faithfulness and love, the power of the resurrection begins to transform us from the inside out, not just for our own benefit, but so that we might take our part in the joyful proclamation of God's love.