

PRAYER

Dear Lord, in our final session today we ask that our hearts will be filled with awe and wonder for what you have done for us.

ACTIVITY/ICE BREAKER

What words come to mind for you when you think of the resurrection?

VIDEO

Watch video 7: Always Easter

READ

Luke 24: 1-12 (NIV) On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words. When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had

REFLECTIONS

How can we ever put into words the experience of that first resurrection dawn? How can we ever glimpse it? Describe it? Imagine it? How can we tap into the experience of those first disciples, that group of faithful women, risking arrest by the hostile Roman authorities as they went to honour and protect the body of Jesus. Think how dark life must have seemed, how down they must have felt. My guess is they had slept very little that weekend. All their dreams lay in ruins. They must have wondered what the last three years had been about. And then... as they trudged through the gloom, under the debilitating weight of disappointment... one of them stops dead. And the others bump into her. And then then they all jump as one of them drops an embalming jar and the sound echoes around them. They stare wide-eyed at the tomb. There, but no longer sealed. Gaping open. Which means what? His body has been stolen? Taken by the Romans? They run and find the wrapping carefully folded. Who would do that? Remove his body and then carefully fold the cloth like that? What does it mean? Well... it means there's a gardener outside, a smile a mile wide about to break across his lips. And as one of the woman sits outside the tomb crying he steps closer and can barely contain his joy and excitement. He longs for the moment when they will see him and know. Everything has changed! The generous God is back, the man with open hands and a heart the size of a planet, is here now. And they can all start again.

The early Christians may not have spoken too much of the death of Jesus on a cross, they were still living with the horror and demeaning scourge of crucifixion, but they spoke a lot about the resurrection. This was the heart of new life. The great gift from the king of all kindness. The one who gave up his place in heaven so he could bring his glory to this earth, fill a tomb with so much of his life that it couldn't hold him in. In chapter 28, Matthew describes an earthquake taking place at the time of the resurrection. Jesus was literally shaking the foundations of the universe as he bust out of the grave. Nothing would be the same. Here is a short reflection, drawing on the moment Mary met Jesus back from the dead, and he spoke to her by name.

REFLECTIONS

Gardens of Resurrection
Mary met you face to Face,
voice to Voice,
name to Name,
In that garden of Resurrection.
Now it's as if we catch
Subtle glimpses of you,
Divine shadows,
Sketchy outlines,
Signs of movement.
Through the trees,
Amongst the undergrowth,
Across crowded streets,
In the middle of the buzz,
And the business,
And the busyness,
Of our daily living.
Right here, each day.
Resurrected, present, with us,
Sometimes unnoticed and unknown,
But here,
In life's ordinary gardens of Resurrection,
Waiting quietly to be spotted.

QUESTIONS

1. What would your response have been, faced by the empty tomb?
2. Rev. Steve shares about the impact the resurrection has had on his life; can you identify?
3. How might the resurrection inform your generosity?
4. What has surprised you the most about God's generosity whilst doing this course? Where have you been invited to become more generous?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we thank you for guiding and leading us through these sessions where we have reflected and wondered. We ask for your blessings as we continue to follow you in the midst of life's complexity. May we never stop to be amazed by the vastness of your generosity to us.