

Sermon: New Horizons
Easter Day, Year B
Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18

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Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Mary Magdalene is a reasonable woman. She has just lost her best friend, the man Jesus, who has healed her and has loved her. He has been unfairly put to death on a cross and she is terribly distraught, very understandable given the circumstances. She goes about doing what she believes to be the next right thing. She goes while it is still dark to Jesus' tomb expecting to find...well, the gospel writer John doesn't actually tell us exactly what she is expecting to find. But she finds that the stone, as we just shared with the children, has been rolled away from the tomb and she freaks out! "They have taken Jesus away and we don't know where they have laid him!" She shares her findings with Peter and John, they come and take a look and they go home. But MM lingers, weeping.

And then she turns around and sees Jesus but she doesn't *know* it's Jesus. Well, why doesn't she know it's Jesus? Are her tears blurring her vision? Does Jesus look different? What makes her think he is the gardener? Is he wearing gloves, and carrying a hoe and a water hose? I am pretty sure he doesn't know it is April Fool's Day. ☺ Or does she not recognize him because she simply *isn't expecting to see him*? She last saw him dead and it simply doesn't enter her reasonable mind that he could be anything else. That Jesus is risen from the dead is not on her horizon.

Can't we see Jesus smiling as he says to her, "Mary!" "Why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Surely he knows whom she is looking for! Is he teasing her? She calls him Rabbouni, teacher. Is he teaching her something new here? That in his rising to life again, that she can receive a gift in the shape of something she has not seen before? That new life awaits her because of Jesus?

Daryl Davis, an African American blues musician, intentionally befriends members of the Ku Klux Klan. Once they get to know him, they realize their hatred is misplaced. "How can they hate me when they don't even know me?" Davis asks. Over 200 members of the Klan have given up their Klan robes after meeting Davis. He keeps the discarded robes in his home as a reminder of what can happen when you sit down to dinner with people who hate you. Davis studied up on the Klan, and he says showing that he took the Klan seriously forced Klansmen to take him seriously.¹

Daryl Davis, over a period of 30 years, was willing to see something in a white Klansman that had not previously been on either his or the Klansman's horizon. And this willingness to learn a new way, to be open to the person there in front of him, allowed them both to receive a new gift in a shape they had not seen before. The gift of connection, the gift of dismantling hatred, the gift, truly of divine love. God was doing a new thing in Daryl's and these Klansmen's lives.

Can we believe that God can do something new in our life that is not yet on our horizon? Are we open to the gift of new life that may come in shapes we cannot yet see? Like Mary Magdalene,

perhaps we need to linger in the garden to encounter the Master Gardener who tends to our relationships so that we might grow in love.

Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed.

ⁱ NPR, August 20, 2017 as reported through Christian Century, 9/13/17