

The women in today's lesson were doing what they had been doing throughout Luke's Gospel. They had been supporting and caring; when most of the disciples had deserted, the women had remained at the foot of the cross while Jesus died; now they had prepared spices to anoint the dead body, carrying out the ritual duties owed by family and friends to those who are gone.

In all of this, the role the women had been given was the kind of counter-culture approach that was so typical of Jesus' way. But at the tomb, which Joseph of Arimathea had donated, they were perplexed by what they found. There was no body inside, just two men in dazzling clothes, whose presence terrified the women. And the men's message did not immediately clarify things, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

The answer which probably came most clearly to mind for the women was, "Where would we look other than in the tomb where he was buried?" But the mysterious men clarified: "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Then they remembered his words."

That seemed to make the women almost the only ones who did remember, for when they returned to tell the men of their experience, those men thought it "an idle tale".... cue the eye rolls, and disbelief. Peter did run to the tomb, and saw it empty, so that he returned amazed – not believing, necessarily, but amazed. Jesus was raised into the chaos and confusion that had been the case ever since they all came to Jerusalem.

As we know, later his followers finally saw Jesus, and came to understand and believe in what had happened. The disciples were changed, became so convinced and convincing that their preaching of the resurrection brought thousands to join them, and spread through the world until it came down to us.

Well, perhaps not all the way to our generation. The numbers on church membership and participation suggest that belief is not all that common in our day. Nor does it seem that everyone has found a better path, that everyone's lives are going fine without a resurrection faith. Many of us are anxious and despairing, living in a world filled with war, pandemic, racism and poverty. It seems that we are unable to save ourselves from any of this. We have what the first women at the tomb received – a message, words that proclaimed resurrection. But we don't seem to know

how to grab hold of this as they did. So perhaps it's time for us to rethink how we find Jesus.

I remember years ago when I was practicing medicine in Flint, Michigan. Everywhere I went back then I saw billboards and bumperstickers proclaiming "I Found It." And I couldn't help but think that this was the wrong way around. It should have been "It found me." Because that is the way that first Easter story went – Jesus found his followers, when they did not even know to search. More than that, a number of the Easter stories make it clear that people could meet and be deeply moved by him, but not recognize that it was Jesus until something he did or said revealed him to them.

So perhaps we need to turn – away from our usual ways of perceiving and valuing the world, toward what Jesus taught us about the places where he is most likely to be – with the poor, the suffering, those in need of love. Perhaps we need to practice prayer, in whatever form we have learned to know God's presence with us. Rather than just talking to God, when we learn to listen, pay attention, and really look, the Risen Christ is present for us still. Perhaps we need to learn to worship with those whom God has given us in this place – here where we love one another, receive with each other bread and wine and water and oil.

When we turn, pray and worship we can still be found by the heart of Christian faith: resurrection. Word of it has not vanished from the world, but still looks to find us. We are the object of God's great love, the ones for whom God came deeply into this human life and gave everything; for whom God seeks everywhere, longing for the salvation of everyone. Christ who was raised from the dead, brings resurrection for all of us.

As Sarah Coakley, Anglican priest and brilliant theologian has said, "Stake your life on resurrection, struggle with it, and everything will change. ...live in this mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, turned out here in the cold and dark. It will start you on this great adventure of the Christian life of redemption, joy and fulfilment, and will hold you in it, in all your frailty and glory, unto your life's end. For Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia. Amen."