

“LOOKING FOR JESUS”

Luke 24:1-12

If you read the stories of the resurrection in the four gospels, you'll find they all start in the same way – people going off to look for Jesus. It's Mary Magdalene and the women who start the search in each case, and in a couple of the accounts Peter goes along a bit later, together with John according to the fourth gospel. And the guards also look for Jesus. I say they search for Jesus, but actually they all go straight to the tomb where they expect to find his body. Even when the women have come back and told the others that he's not in the grave, that's where Peter and John go to look.

But that's only natural, I suppose. As far as they're concerned, Jesus is dead. The women actually saw him being put into the tomb at the end of Friday afternoon. And dead people can't move, can they? So if you're going to look for a dead body, you go to the place you saw it buried. It's only common sense. And it's what their experience told them would happen. No doubt they had been through similar things before with other people and what had happened on those occasion told them that the best place to look for a body was in the place where it had been put. That's the cold logic of the situation. (Of course, if they'd listened to Jesus, they would have know that it wasn't where he expected to be a couple of days after his death.)

In Terry Pratchett's first *Discworld*TM book, *The Colour Of Magic*, he has this to say about the gods who watch over the mythical universe through which the Discworld floats on the back of a tortoise:

“It was all very well going on about pure logic and how the universe was ruled by logic and the harmony of numbers, but the plain fact of the matter was that ... the gods had a habit of going round to atheists' houses and smashing their windows.”

Easter is the day when God came and smashed the atheists' windows – and he smashes ours, too. He shows us that things are as we expect them to be, that Jesus doesn't necessarily conform to our logical and common sense ways of thinking. The women and Peter and John and Mary Magdalene ended up looking for Jesus in the wrong place. He wasn't where they expected him to be. He is, in Gerard Hughes' famous phrase, “The God of surprises”.

Mary kept looking, though. In John's gospel, we read that she does the common sense thing again – she asks the man she thinks is the gardener: does he have any idea where Jesus might be? Well, just like in a pantomime or a Shakespeare comedy or a Whitehall farce, it turns out to be a case of mistaken identity and the apparent gardener is, in fact, Jesus. But Mary is so confused and so sure that Jesus is dead and his body has been moved, that she doesn't realise who it really is.

It's only when Jesus calls her by her name that she realises things are not as she thought they would be. He's actually been looking for her, while she has been looking for him in all the wrong places.

And I believe that Jesus still is looking for us. After all, that what he said his mission was. When we was at the home of Zacchaeus, he said that he had come to “*seek and to save the lost*” (*Luke 19:10*). He doesn't conform to our stereotypes. He's not always to be found in the places we think he should be – nor even in the places our logic and common sense tell us he should be.

He comes round and breaks our windows and shouts our name through the windows to let us know he's looking for us, he wants us to have the very best that he can give us – peace and hope and joy in this life, and eternity with God when this life is finished. Don't be tempted to keep looking for Jesus in the wrong places – just call out to him and he'll come and find you. Pray that he will make himself known to you – and be prepared for him to make as big a difference to your life today as he did to Mary's life two thousand years ago.