

The Easter story begins in darkness. Now, normally I love the darkness: I mean, what's not to love: stars, moon, coolness, quiet....But this is a different kind of darkness: the darkness of worry, anxiety, betrayal, execution.

Everything that the followers had been planning in their heads—dreams for the rest of their lives—has ended amid the noise of clashing swords, screams, and crowds shouting and out of control.

And on this morning, in the real—and emotional-- darkness, the women head to the tomb. The first is Mary—nicknamed the Tower for her faith, and the other, I guess, generic Mary. The other Mary.

They are going to prepare the body for burial. It's very rare for anyone to prepare a dead body who is not blood kin, so Mary Magdalene and Mary, just Mary must have been close to Jesus.

In the pale light—not quite dawn, they move quietly so as not to attract attention. The ground starts to rumble and they realize that even when you think things can't get worse—it usually does. They struggle to remain on their feet through the earthquake.

When suddenly, what to their wondering eyes should appear, but a spectacularly bright angel. They have to physically shade their eyes.

"I know who you're looking for," the angel says, "He isn't here. He's been raised!"

This is not at all what the ladies were expecting. They run to tell the others, absolutely certain that they will not be believed, since they can hardly believe it themselves. It's too good to be true.

It's too sudden.

They were just starting to get used to the darkness: the darkness in their minds, the darkness in their hearts.

Darkness, you realize, is not hard to get used to. Our eyes become accustomed to it fairly quickly. We learn how to live and move with less light. It's not hard, and our expectations adjust accordingly.

And the darkness in our hearts—well, it's hard to shake it. When we are crushed by life, by loss—it feels like the dark is all we have ever known. We can't imagine the light will ever return. We kind of get used to it. Expect it.

Do any of you know the parable of Plato's cave?

In it, Plato describes a group of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all their lives, their only line of sight: a blank wall that they face. The people watch shadows which are projected onto the wall from objects passing in front of a fire behind them and they even give names to these shadows.

The shadows are the prisoners' reality, but are not accurate images from the real world.

Plato is making the point that the shadows represent the fragment of reality that we can normally perceive through our senses, while the objects under the sun represent the true forms of objects. (Thank you, Wikipedia, for helping me with that.)

It's altogether too possible to get used to the dimness of the world. We complain bitterly about injustice, lies told, the cruelty we see on display— and we see THAT as the reality of what is, rather than acknowledging them as the shadows of the world thrown up on the walls of our lives.

“It's easy to think “well, that's the way it's always been.” And mean, “that's the way it always will be.” The world will always be broken. The mighty will always crush the weak, the truth will always go unheeded, the vulnerable will always be expendable— Humans will always hurt each other. World without end. Amen.”

The Rev Megan Castellan

It's as if the women and the disciples had only been seeing the reflections on the wall the whole time they were with Jesus, but now the light has dawned, they can turn around and see what was causing the reflection: and it is blinding.

Easter surprises us with all its burning brightness, and shows our negative thoughts for what they are: reflections, shadows of the only world we can see, unless we turn toward the light and see the reality.

Death is not the end. Lies are not truth. Love conquers fear, and discouragement, and oppression. It lights up every dark place and strengthens atrophied muscles, straightens our backbones, and opens our eyes.

Christ's resurrection reminds us that no matter how desperate or scary things might seem, if you just turn towards the fire which can burn in us-- darkness will not win the day.

Easter is when we are called, blinking, back into the light of this hope. No matter what is occurring in our world right now, or in our lives right now-- it is not the end. The light will return to the world, blinding us with its love, making our feet stagger with its impact.

Because Christ isn't dead or in the tomb.

He's right here, changing the world through us as we carry with us enough light to chase away the shadows of the world with the unrestrained, unrestricted breadth of God's love. Amen.