

EASTER

Saint John's account of the resurrection shows the complexity of interpreting bits of evidence and the importance of learning more about a situation. Mary Magdalene arrived first on the scene, before sunrise, perhaps after a sleepless night at home. She saw the stone rolled away and the empty tomb. From these two objects, she concluded some people had stolen the body of Jesus. She did not yet understand; the day was still dark.

She informed the two leaders, Peter and the disciple Jesus loved. All of them ran. Mary Magdalene ran to report the news, and now they were all running to the tomb. The beloved disciple arrived first, perhaps a sign that affection can impel you to accomplish a lot. He saw more objects: the burial cloths. Peter entered the tomb and saw one more item: the cloth that had covered the head folded up and neatly set to the side, as if the recent occupant of the tomb was still following his mother's orders to make his bed each morning. As day dawned, so did understanding. When the beloved disciple finally entered the tomb, John says, "he saw and believed."

John also explains the problem, why after all their time with Jesus, they did not immediately figure out what had happened. John says, "they did not yet understand the Scripture that [Jesus] had to rise from the dead." Previous scriptures had prophesied the resurrection and indeed declared it had to happen.

Today, everyone has the same evidence: the prophecies of scripture and the testimony of eye-witnesses who saw the empty tomb and encountered the risen Christ. Some only gradually come to faith as darkness turns to dawn. Hearing the testimony of others, they see the light. John's gospel tolerates those who need more time, while it shrewdly lays out the details before the eyes of all.

Interpreting evidence is complex, but important. Many times in life we see only a bit and fail to understand. We glimpse a person on the street and reach unfair conclusions about their lives and values. We believe other drivers are deliberately blocking our path. We see something shocking on the internet and wrongly conclude that it tells the whole truth. We hear words that offend us without knowing what the person actually meant. We spend a lot of time in the dark, thinking we're in the light. Whenever we form harsh opinions of someone else, that's the first clue we probably don't have all the evidence. God made that person for a reason, and God loves that person still. Mary Magdalene, Peter and the beloved disciple all made haste to learn the facts. The more we understand a situation the better we enter the light.