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Reflection for April 23

By Kate Croskery Jones

In the Garden

John 20:12-18

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her. (NRSV)

My earliest memories of "In the Garden" are of my dad whistling the tune as we walked across a busy parking lot, my fingers wrapped around his index finger as my small hand did not fit easily into his much larger hand. #314, "In the Garden's" home in UM Hymnal is a well-worn page at every church I have served. I believe it was sung at all four of my grandparents' funerals, and at many, many funerals I've officiated. It is also my weeding song. I often do come to the garden alone to weed, early in the day when the dew is still on whatever might be in bloom. It is in the smell and the feel of dirt, teeming with life that I cannot see that I most always sense the presence of God.

I recently read that C. Austin Miles wrote this hymn on a dreary April morning in 1912 in his basement in New Jersey. The hymn came to him after his bible had fallen open to the Mary's post-resurrection encounter with Jesus as told in John 20. "In the Garden," is an Easter hymn.

The hymn endured the Influenza (H1N1) Pandemic of 1918, two world wars, another wave of H1N1 and a host of other trials of this last century.

This Eastertide, we can't reach out to touch the people we love. This Eastertide we miss the smells of the old sanctuary. We miss feeling in our bones the vibrations of organ pipes and booming tympanies of "Christ the Lord Has Risen Today!" Life poses new challenges. We are a bit more restless and perhaps a bit more irritable. We can still come to the garden alone.

"I'll stay in the garden with him, though the night around me be falling, but he bids me go, thru the voice of woe, his voice to me is calling. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own, and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has over known."