SCRIPTURE:
Blessed is she who has believed what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished.
(Luke 2:45)

MEDITATION:
Over the course of the Easter story, we observe that women appear mainly in the background. We are told by Matthew (27:55) that there were many women present at the crucifixion, but we are given the names of only a few—Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus cast out seven demons, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and also Joanna, wife of Cuza, who was the manager of the household of the tetrarch Herod Antipas (Luke 8:3). These were influential women who, according to Luke, were supporting Jesus's ministry from their own means. They had been Jesus's companions since the beginning of his ministry and had accompanied him from Galilee. At Jesus's crucifixion, many of them were looking on from a distance. Some, however, ventured nearer to the cross, and amongst these were Mary, Jesus's mother; Jesus's unnamed aunt; Mary Magdalene; and Mary, wife of Clopas (John 19:25).

Later in the day, after Jesus had died, Joseph of Arimathea boldly asks Pilate for Jesus's body so he can lay him in his own tomb. At this point, we find that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary have also become emboldened, and position themselves very close to the tomb, sitting directly opposite it (Matt. 27:61). Later, they return home to prepare the spices and perfume to be used in the anointing of the body. This was the traditional role assigned to women at the time, in addition to their duties of preparing food and running the household.

The next morning, when the women arrive at the tomb to carry out their religious rites, we learn from Luke that there were several women present, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James (Luke 24:10). This time they were not at a distance or in the background, but we find some of them going right inside the tomb where Jesus had been placed. The space was filled with the holy presence of God, as two angelic beings recalled for them the words Jesus had previously spoken to them — that the Son of Man must die and be raised again on the third day. As they pondered these words, they remembered what Jesus had said to them, and they believed that what he had said to them had been accomplished! The women's excited eye-witness accounts did nothing to convince the Eleven at the time, as they themselves had not been present to experience God's holy presence in the empty tomb. Peter did run to the tomb, but whereas the women were convinced of the truth of the resurrection, Peter was left wondering what had happened. Similarly, we read of two believers walking to Emmaus who were amazed at the women's claim to have seen angels who assured them that Jesus was alive (Luke 24:21). Later, these men would come to a realization of this truth for themselves, when the stranger who accompanied them revealed himself to be the risen Lord.

REFLECTION:
What does the ever-increasing boldness of the women to go deeper into the holy presence of God mean to us over this Easter season? Do we hold back, afraid of where this could take us, or do we long for more of his presence and power in our lives? The women were blessed by believing the word they had been given by Jesus, affirmed by the angels, and they were the first to comprehend the truth of his resurrection. Do we hold onto words we have been given, even though they may not yet have been fulfilled? Do we take time to give thanks and remember that our loving Heavenly Father is faithful to accomplish what he has spoken over us and that his great delight is to bless his children?

PRAYER:
Help us, Lord, to go deeper and higher into your heart. Help us in the stressful days in which we
live to make time to sit in your presence and know your loving embrace, and there to find
the peace and encouragement we need. Thank you that it is your greatest pleasure to bless us as
your children and to equip us to share your love with those around us. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Margaret Dickin holds an MA in Classical Philology and a PhD in Classical Studies from
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