Could It Be True?

Scripture Background

_This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group._

As the Easter Season begins, the church replaces the Old Testament readings with passages from the Acts of the Apostles instead. In today's passage, Peter gives a summary of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He explains that Jesus entrusted him with preaching about Jesus' life, promising that all who believe in Jesus will be forgiven their sins. As the season continues, we will hear more about the disciples' words and miraculous actions as they begin to spread the word about Jesus far and wide beyond Jerusalem. In the second reading, St. Paul promises that our lives will not end in death but in glory with Jesus.

Opening Prayer

_Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:_

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good and Gracious God,

thank you for this gathering to reflect on your Word of Life.

Open our eyes and ears

so that we may see and hear the message you have for us today.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: John 20:1-9

_Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence._

_Ask:_ What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

_Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down._
Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

All of the resurrection stories begin with the first witnesses to the Resurrection being confused and/or afraid, not fully comprehending what they see or hear. It makes sense that they didn’t understand. As readers 2,000 years later, we have the benefit of knowing the “end of the story” before Jesus’ friends and family did. Although several times Jesus told his followers that he would be killed and then raised from the dead, the evangelists wrote that the apostles didn’t understand what Jesus was saying then. How could they have?

Mary Magdalene is a central figure in this resurrection story, as she is in all of the other Gospels. She stayed with Jesus throughout his torture until he died, and all four Gospels tell us she was right there three days later when they discovered the empty tomb. Peter and a mysterious unnamed “other disciple” are a part of this story, too, as they realize Jesus’ body is missing. They seem to realize that his corpse wasn’t stolen (if it were, the burial garments surely would have gone with it). The unnamed disciple “saw and believed,” but we aren’t told what he believed. The passage ends, suggesting the trio still doesn’t understand what has happened. The seven verses that follow this passage tell us that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, and she comes to believe he is alive again.

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

1. Have you had an experience of expecting the worst only to be surprised or amazed at an unexpected turn of events? Please share.

2. It wasn’t one of the 12 male apostles but Mary Magdalene who stayed at Jesus’ side until his death, and she is the only person mentioned in all four Gospels to have learned of or met the resurrected Jesus first. What does that say to you?

3. When you hear news that seems too good to be true, how do you first react? Do you believe it and thank God for it, or do you look for reasons it can’t be true?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Jesus, may what we have heard and discussed today inspire us to leave here committed to living as more faithful disciples.

Amen.