

“I have seen the Lord”

Happy Easter! Or should I say Christ the Lord is risen, [response The Lord is risen indeed.] Those are two traditional Easter greetings. The first greeting you can say to almost anyone, because Easter has become a secular holiday in the way Christmas has. Most of our society celebrates Easter. Baskets filled with chocolate bunnies, marshmallow peeps, jellybeans, and cream eggs shout spring, but resurrection, not so much. Some companies have tried to put the Christ back in Easter by offering chocolate crosses and cross fidget spinners. However, I feel there is something deeply wrong about eating the symbol of our Lord’s torture and death, no matter how delicious the chocolate is. Using the cross to calm my fidgeting fingers also seems wrong. The cross is not a toy.

I remember the first time I heard the call and response of Christ the Lord is risen, [response The Lord is risen indeed.] I thought that was so right. We were announcing our belief in what Easter is all about, at least for the Church. We are telling each other and the world that this is more than a happy day. It is an ecstatic day, because we know that Jesus is risen from the dead. He is now the Christ, the Messiah for all times and places. Death has been conquered, sins are forgiven, and we are all alive in the living God. This is not something to keep undercover. Shout it from the rooftops, and the whole world will respond.

This year, I heard The Rev. Joseph Yoo point out words that are an even stronger affirmation of the Resurrection. The phrase is in the very last verse of today’s Gospel reading. It is spoken by Mary Magdalene, whose role in the burial and resurrection of Jesus is very important. She is not just a bystander in these events; she is a major figure.

Other Gospel accounts tell us that when Jesus’ body was laid in the tomb, the women who remained at the cross had seen the tomb. A small group of them returned on the first day of the week, Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath. They carried with them spices and ointments to anoint the body of Jesus; a Jewish custom in those days. They wondered how they would roll away the stone covering the opening of the tomb. But when they arrived, they found the stone already rolled away.<sup>1</sup>

However, in John’s Gospel, only Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb. She sees that the tomb is empty and runs to tell the disciples who are in hiding. Of course, because she is a woman, they do not believe her. Peter and the beloved disciple have a foot race to see the tomb for themselves. Mary follows them. The disciples leave, but Mary Magdalene is so distraught that she stays at the tomb trying to figure out where Jesus’ body could be. As she kneels there, she hears a voice asking why she is crying. She tells the speaker about the missing body.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12

She thinks he is the gardener (which is why the image on the front of your bulletin shows Jesus holding a shovel). But when he calls her by name, her eyes are opened, and she recognizes him. She calls him *Rabbouni*, a variation on Rabbi or teacher. He gives her a task. “Go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” She hurries off to where the disciples are hiding.

When she arrives, she says the powerful words, “I have seen the Lord.” Christ the Lord is risen, The Lord is risen indeed, is powerful, but honestly, it is a little formal and churchy, don’t you think? Mary’s exclamation “I have seen the Lord” is plain, blunt, and startling. If someone says, “I have seen the Lord,” that brings us up short. We would want to know what they mean. What did they see? Where did they see the Lord? What did the Lord look like? What did the Lord have to say? What did the Lord do?

The disciples will be able to say later that day that they have seen the Lord. Although Thomas, who was not present, will say he won’t believe until he sees the risen Jesus, too. He will get his chance a week later. Jesus will say to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” We are those who have not seen and yet believe. Except have we really not seen Jesus?

We see Jesus every day, but because we do not have eyes to see, we do not realize it. We can see Christ in the waiter and cook who are working in a restaurant today. We can see Christ in the cashier at the supermarket or convenience store who works on Easter so we can get our last-minute items. We can see Christ in our everyday interactions with the garbage man, the post office worker, homeless person, doctor, nurse, lawyer, people we like, the people we do not like, and the person sitting to your right or left. They all hold the image of Christ. Jesus told us so when he proclaimed that when we help the least of these you have helped him.<sup>2</sup> Jesus is everywhere.

With open eyes, we can shout every day, “I have seen the Lord.” Easter is not just a day; it is a season of fifty days. What’s more, Easter goes well beyond the Day of Pentecost. In truth, we are an Easter people. We can, if we choose, make Easter the rule of our life. Instead of dwelling on the hardships, fear, and tragedies of this world, we can forge into the breach. We can be the ones who see the resurrection everywhere and share how it is overcoming the brokenness of this world. We are the people who raise the banner that reads “I have seen the Lord” because we have seen him in the face of everyone we meet.

No matter which greeting we choose on this Easter Day think “I have seen the Lord.” For we have seen the Lord. He is risen and he is all around us.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 25:31-45