

I have seen the Lord
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John 20:1-18

Alleluia Christ is Risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

I'll be honest. It's hard to say those words and be joyous. **I know that Jesus is risen**, but I am feeling more along the lines of the words from the hymn, Precious Lord – Precious Lord take my hand lead me on, let me stand. I am tired and I am weak I am worn.

We have had a Holy Week like none of us can remember in our lifetimes. We have not been able to be in our churches. We have not been able to do the things that help us observe Holy Week and Easter from cooking soup for Agape meal, sitting in the church for the night watch and decorating the church for Easter. For me, working to create services online and then dealing with all the technology glitches that happen have been frustrating as I know they have been for you as well as you try to log on and get some semblance of our usual practice in our journey to Easter. Never mind everything else that comes along with living in the area which has the highest number of covid infections and deaths in the US. I am not going to name the “everything else” because we know them way too well.

So where do we go from here this Easter. We can start by walking with Mary Magdalene as she went to Jesus' tomb that first Easter Sunday. She too must have been tired, weak and worn.

The weeks leading up to Jesus' crucifixion were an anxious time. You hear it in the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus says it is time to go to Judea to see Lazarus, the disciples remind him that the last time he was in Judea, they were threatening to stone him. The last days with their teacher leading up to the crucifixion must have been filled with anxiety, uncertainty and fear. Then his arrest - being taken from them in the middle of the night, his trial behind closed doors, the crowds choosing Barabbas over Jesus.

Then the worst – Jesus' death on the cross and we know that Mary was there at the foot of that cross - watching Jesus die. Then sabbath was approaching with time only for a quick burial. Now after the sabbath, after a day of waiting at home and grieving, Mary goes to Jesus' tomb early in the morning while it was still dark. She arrives and finds it empty. Someone has taken his body!!! She rushes to tell the Peter and the disciple Jesus loved. They come, see the empty tomb and then go away again. They believe but don't yet understand scripture.

Mary remains. It is too much and she breaks down and begins to weep openly. She looks into the tomb and sees angels who ask her why she is weeping. A man approaches her and asks her the same question. Mary asks if he has taken Jesus' body away. The man calls her name and she realizes that this is Jesus. Jesus!

Imagine the hope that began to build in her. A flicker – could it really be? The voice she knew so well. She reaches for him and Jesus says do not hold on to me. I always found those words of Jesus hard to hear. Could he have not just taken her hand? It is the most natural thing in the world wanting to hold on to the unexpected arrival of a loved one. But Jesus needed her to understand that he was risen and everything was different. Jesus needed her to reach beyond the physical Jesus that she had known and to not hold on to what was, but rather to come to know the risen Jesus.

That is the challenge isn't it – to recognize and to come to know the risen Christ in the midst of grief and death, and in the midst of being weary and worn. I noticed that there was a lot of rushing around that early morning as we are prone to do in distress. Mary getting up early to go to the tomb, rushing to get the disciples, their running to the tomb and then away again. It is only when Mary collapses and weeps, that she is able to see Jesus, to hear him call her name and to start the journey to come to know the risen Christ. She leaves the tomb and goes to the disciples where she declares – I have seen the Lord.

Where in our lives these days do we need to pause – to even to collapse in tears so we can hear Jesus calling our name? When we are tired, weary and worn, it is easy to keep on pushing, fretting over the situation, watching the news coverage or finding tasks that we convince ourselves must be done.

As I said before, I have been frustrated with the many technical difficulties of streaming online worship and I was determined to fix them. On Good Friday, I spent hours working on using YouTube as our streaming platform since Facebook live which we had been using previously was not working. After the service that evening, which again had a sound problem, I was frantically working again on it. Finally, I turned to sermon writing and was not getting anywhere which was making me even more worn.

I then had a feeling that I needed to stop. I took my dogs for a walk and on that walk, I realized that what helped Mary recognize Jesus was that she paused. She stopped rushing around and wept. It was then that she heard Jesus calling her name. As I walked, I thought about how Jesus was calling my name and how I was not hearing it because of my rushing around. And so I paused and began to listen and the sermon was given.

This Easter how is God calling your name? If you are one of those rushing around or fretting or are simply worn out by the situation we are in, know that Jesus is calling your name. Take some time today to pause even if it is ten minutes to ponder how God is calling your name and to listen. Listen because Christ is risen. Christ is among us. Perhaps more than ever this year need to recognize his presence. Pray and listen because we too like Mary are being called to hear and know the risen Lord so that we too can go and proclaim – I have seen the Lord.