

I Have Seen Jesus

John 20:11-18

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You've been there – probably – somewhere emotionally when you've lost someone or something dear to you. You've been there – probably – when all you can do is stand there and weep or sit and weep or lie down and ache and weep. You've been there – probably. You understand that feeling. And I hope you are not there now. You know – you can imagine – a grief so painful, so blinding, that you can't even see what's right in front of you, who's right in front of you. "Mary stood weeping outside the tomb." It seems odd to me at first thought that she didn't recognize Jesus – but then again, maybe not. She wasn't seeing straight. She wasn't noticing what was around her. She wasn't all there and didn't want to be there at all. "Mary stood weeping outside the tomb." I can understand that she didn't see Jesus. I can understand that she didn't look around. She was so caught up in herself and her own grief that she hardly noticed where she was. She hardly knew what she was doing. She didn't even see that someone was there, and didn't even try to see them through her tears. All she could do was stand and weep. I understand that kind of grief. But then, Jesus said her name, "Mary". And she turned. And she knew. "Teacher!" And everything changed. "I have seen the Lord." I would love to have heard that conversation with the disciples. "I have seen the Lord." Did Mary seem crazy? From weeping to wide-eyed laughter in one move. "I have seen the Lord." I wonder what the disciples thought. I wonder what Mary thought. Everything changed with one word. Everything changed with one call of her name.

But Mary was not crazy. Mary was transformed by the grace of God. What had been her deepest darkest moment of emptiness and despair became suddenly light, hope, possibility, wholeness. That is the reality perhaps you have not known as absolutely as Mary, or perhaps you have. "I have seen Jesus." What was it like?

Complete transformation in a moment, in a word, in a name, a call from someone who knows you and knows you completely, who loves and loves completely. Resurrection is hard to understand and even harder to explain. It's about complete transformation. Everything is changed. One reality becomes an entirely different and even opposite reality. Death becomes life. Darkness becomes light. Grief becomes joy. Loss becomes gift. That's resurrection. How is it possible? – I don't know – by the power of God. Jesus was dead. And then Jesus was alive and standing before Mary, calling her name, calling her to a whole new reality – where anything is possible – everything is possible!

We live in that new reality. After the resurrection – we live in a world where transformation is possible – where life, light, peace, joy, grace – are gifts of God's love to each of us and all of us.

And yet we live in that reality where grief and despair and pain are still possible as well.

We live in that garden where both realities collide – where resurrection is possible, is real, has already happened, is standing right in front of our eyes. And yet we sometimes don't see it. We can still feel loss and suffering and separation from God – where hope seems to be gone. Where love seems to be dead. And yet where God stands toe to toe with us, loving us – face to face – calling each of us by name, calling us to transformation, calling us to resurrection, calling us to live into hope, to recognize Christ with us, and to receive all that is possible.

How do we recognize the reality of resurrection? How do we live in that new reality? How do we hear Christ's call and feel / know / experience God's transformation? And how do we help others to know and experience resurrection – the grace of our loving and awesome God.

The death seems so real – in our world. The suffering is right before us, all around us, even within and among us. You can't miss it. How can we not get lost there in the weeping, not noticing the resurrection all around us, not recognizing the Christ standing before us, not open to God's transformation. Well, really it's easy to miss – standing graveside, we see the tomb. We need the spirit of God, the voice of God, the breath of God to breathe over us and awaken us to new life. It will happen.

Today we stand in this garden of grace. This garden where death turns to life, light shines in the darkness, peace soothes troubled hearts and joy bubbles up out of the depths of the earth. Today we stand in this garden of grace and Christ calls to you – by name – Christ calls to you.

Perhaps you are weeping and broken like Mary – and Christ calls to you. Perhaps you are lost in grief or despair – so Christ calls you by name. Or perhaps you are sitting comfortably in the garden, peacefully, amid abundant blessing – well, Christ calls to you as well. Christ says wake up. Wake up to the transformation that is all around you, to the possibilities God sets before you. Hear Jesus calling to you, and respond to that voice – I have seen the Lord. Feel that Spirit stirring within you and pushing you out to share God's love with others. Tell people what a difference God's love can make. Live as a person who has been transformed by God's grace. Live as a disciple who has received resurrection. Live as one who has been touched by Jesus. Live as a child of God who knows that grace, that peace, that light, and that joy. Anything is possible. You know that. So share it! Live in this power of resurrection and believe. "I have seen the Lord." If you live it, just imagine what God can do thru you. "I have seen the Lord."