***Embracing the uncertain***

**Lenten Worship Series – Easter Service**

***The Proof of the Resurrection***

**April 12, 2020**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**Announcements and Offering**

***The Empty Tomb***

**Call to Worship:**

Let’s face it. The idea of a physical resurrection of a dead person back to life is an utterly irrational claim to make. Many of us are far too empirical, and far too skeptical, to readily believe that the resurrection of Jesus actually happened. But as people of faith, we believe not only that the Resurrection *happened*, but also that it is the central aspect of our Christian conviction. Without the Resurrection, there would be no Christianity.

(*Embracing the Uncertain*, p. 79)

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| **Drama – Mourning to Dancing** |

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| **HC#233 – Christ the Lord Is Risen Today**  **SB#218 – Christ the Lord is risen today** | HC-233  TB-248 – Easter Hymn | HCD22-T13  HTD3-T9 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#237 – Cornerstone** | HC-237 | HCD22-T17 |
| **HC#241 – Crown Him with Many Crowns**  **SB#358 – Crown Him with many crowns** | HC- 241  TB-162 – Diademata | HCD23-T11  HTD1-T8 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#217 – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing** | TB-47 – Truro | No CD |
| **SB#226 – Let us rejoice, the fight is won** | TB-43 – St Francis | HTD2-T15 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#227 – Look, ye saints! the sight is glorious** | TB-402 – Helmsley | No CD |
| **SB#228 – Low in the grave He lay** | TB-905 – Up from the grave He arose | HTD2-T17 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#229 – O joyful sound! O glorious hour** | TB-415 – He Lives | No CD |
| **SB#276 – Thine is the glory** | TB-746 – Maccabeus | No CD |

***Between Two Memories***

**Choric Reading:**

**Reader 1:** What is interesting at the outset of Luke’s version of the Easter story is that we are not given the names of the women. At least not yet.

**Reader 2:** *1On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.*

**Reader 3:** The women showed up to do their job, to prepare the body of Jesus with spices and do their due diligence. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw the stone had already been rolled away.

**Reader 1:** *4While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ”*

**Reader 2:** Like in the other Gospels, the women react with understandable fear. Dead things are supposed to stay dead; hopelessness stays hopeless; and darkness stays dark. When you are looking for new life, you don’t find it in the grave.

**Reader 3:** *8Then they remembered his words.*

**Reader 1:** Yes, the women were afraid and perplexed. But according to Luke, do you know what their real problem was? The women were forgetful. They and the other disciples should have remembered what Jesus had been telling them all along.

**Reader 2:** Except Luke isn’t done. It is not until *now* that Luke chooses to reveal the women’s names.

**Reader 3:** *9When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.*

**Reader 1:** Mary Magdalene (a prostitute) and Joanna (the wife of an employee of Herod) had scandal in their past. They were carrying with them reasons why no one should believe a word they had to say. The disciples could not let go of all the baggage these women carried from their past. They couldn’t forget it.

**Reader 2:** Ultimately, Luke’s Easter story is about competing memories. It is about making a choice between which set of memories you will choose to claim today.

**Reader 3:** Will you choose to remember all the reasons why your life isn’t worthy of God’s love? All the shame and guilt from your past, all those ways in which you are too weak and underserving of resurrection? If you do, then you will see this resurrection as nonsense, just like the disciples did.

**Reader 1:** Or will you choose to remember what God has been telling you all along? Will you choose the memories of God’s love actively at work in your life? Will you choose to remember the day of your salvation and that you are God’s child? Will you choose to remember evidence throughout your life that in Christ, you have been given the power to face your future with clarity and not confusion, with fearlessness and not fright?

**Reader 2:** If you do, then on this day, your new life can start right here.

(Luke 24:1-11, *The Message*;

*Embracing the Uncertain*, pp. 85-88)

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| **HC#89 – Knowing You**  **SB#565 – All I once held dear** | HC-89  TB-725 – Knowing You | HCD7-T19  No CD |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#23 – Such Love**  **SB#199 – Such love, pure as the whitest snow** | HC-23  TB-845 – Such love | HCD2A-T13  No CD |
| **HC#29 – Psalm 103** | HC-29 | HCD2A-T19 |
| **HC#77 – Change My Heart, O God**  **SB#409 – Change my heart, O God** | HC-77  TB-584 – same | HCD6-T17  No CD |
| **HC#94 – Lamb of God** | HC-94 | HCD8-T14 |
| **HC#123 – Shine on Us** | HC-123 | HCD11-T13 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **HC#137 – Worthy Is the Lamb**  **SB#201 – Thank You for the cross, Lord** | HC-137  TB-947 – Worthy is the Lamb | HCD12-T17  No CD |
| **HC#139 – There Is a Message**  **SB#439 – There is a message** | HC-139  TB-879 – same | HCD12-T19  No CD |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |
| **HC#166 – We Fall Down** | HC-166 | HCD15-T16 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19-T15 |
| **HC#207 – Grace Alone**  **SB#699 – Every promise we can make** | HC-207  TB-640 – Grace alone | HCD19-T17  No CD |
| **HC#214 – Holy Spirit** | HC-214 | HCD20-T14 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **HC#265 – Come Just as You Are** | HC-265 | HCD25-T15 |

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| **HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty**  **SB#376 – King of kings, majesty** | HC-219  TB-722 – same | HCD20-T19  No CD |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |

**Testimony of Faith – [Choose someone from the congregation who can testify on this theme.]**

***Embracing the Uncertain***

**[Each week, *Embracing the Uncertain* is a time of silent prayer by the congregation. The leader should walk the congregation through the bullet points below.]**

**Leader:** Do you want to know how to accept resurrection in your life today? Do you want to know how to embrace the uncertainty of fear and grief? According to Luke, it’s through remembrance. God has been working in you, whether you realize it or not, and has already given you everything you need to embrace new life.

Silently meditate on some of the most significant spiritual moments of your life.

* Remember who God is.
* Remember you are God’s child.
* Remember what you already know about how you are to live.
* Remember that God’s grace has been at work your entire life, and at this moment, this very moment, the Easter story is giving you this key to new life.

**Prayer:** God, it is with amazement and profound gratitude that I claim your resurrection power. Thank you for not leaving me alone, and for raising me up to new life in Christ. Empower me to live in the peace, hope, and love that only you offer, and enable me to share the good news of Jesus with others. Amen.

(*Embracing the Uncertain*, pp. 86, 92)

**Message – When God Calls You by Name**

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| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#23 – Such Love**  **SB#199 – Such love, pure as the whitest snow** | HC-23  TB-845 – Such love | HCD2A-T13  No CD |
| **HC#29 – Psalm 103** | HC-29 | HCD2A-T19 |
| **HC#77 – Change My Heart, O God**  **SB#409 – Change my heart, O God** | HC-77  TB-584 – same | HCD6-T17  No CD |
| **HC#94 – Lamb of God** | HC-94 | HCD8-T14 |
| **HC#123 – Shine on Us** | HC-123 | HCD11-T13 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **HC#137 – Worthy Is the Lamb**  **SB#201 – Thank You for the cross, Lord** | HC-137  TB-947 – Worthy is the Lamb | HCD12-T17  No CD |
| **HC#139 – There Is a Message**  **SB#439 – There is a message** | HC-139  TB-879 – same | HCD12-T19  No CD |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |
| **HC#166 – We Fall Down** | HC-166 | HCD15-T16 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19-T15 |
| **HC#207 – Grace Alone**  **SB#699 – Every promise we can make** | HC-207  TB-640 – Grace alone | HCD19-T17  No CD |
| **HC#214 – Holy Spirit** | HC-214 | HCD20-T14 |
| **HC#265 – Come Just as You Are** | HC-265 | HCD25-T15 |

**Benediction:**

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

(Hebrews 13:20-21)

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| **HC#241 – Crown Him with Many Crowns**  **SB#358 – Crown Him with many crowns** | HC- 241  TB-162 – Diademata | HCD23-T11  HTD1-T8 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#149 – In Christ Alone**  **SB#861 – In Christ alone** | HC-149  TB-132 – same | HCD13-T19 |
| **HC#161 – My Great Redeemer’s Praise**  **SB#89 – O for a thousand tongues to sing** | HC-161  TB-57 – Azmon  TB-75 – Grimsby | HCD15-T11  HTD4-T4 (4 vs.)  No CD |
| **HC#137 – Worthy Is the Lamb**  **SB#201 – Thank You for the cross, Lord** | HC-137  TB-947 – Worthy is the Lamb | HCD12-T17  No CD |

DeVega, Magrey R. *Embracing the Uncertain: a Lenten Study for Unsteady Times*. Abingdon Press, 2017.

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| **Lent 2020 – Easter Service** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Mourning to Dancing**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2014 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Resurrection |
| **Scripture:** | John 20:11-18 |
| **Synopsis:** | Mary recounts her visit to the Garden tomb. |
| **Characters:** | Mary |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Biblical attire (optional). |
| **Setting:** | Bare stage. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Mary enters to center stage.*]

**Mary:** How quickly things can turn around. Friday was one of the darkest days ever known to Mankind. Today the sun is shining brighter than it ever has before. Friday, I knew grief greater than I could ever imagine; so great that I thought my heart had literally been torn in two. Today, I have joy far beyond measure. Friday was marked with death. Today is marked with life anew. Friday they laid his body in the tomb. Today it is gloriously empty – Jesus is alive!

Just a week ago, all of Jerusalem celebrated as Jesus rode into town on the back of a donkey. It seemed like the time had finally come for him to establish his kingdom. But it was the start of something completely different.

The Jewish leaders were plotting with Judas, one of his own, to arrest him. They were losing the people and needed to silence Jesus, one way or another. And after the Passover meal with his disciples, they found their opportunity. As Jesus and his followers entered the olive grove, Judas met them with a mob of soldiers and Temple guards. Jesus was bound and led away and his disciples scattered.

The next time I saw him, I barely recognized him. He was beaten beyond recognition, stripped and nailed to a cross. I’m not sure what type of trial could have been conducted overnight that would have led to a guilty verdict, but there he was, crucified between two thieves. I’ve never cried so much in all my life. I’ve never known such anguish before and hope to never again. They might as well have hung me next to him, because I could not imagine living without him.

As they took his body down, we watched carefully where they laid him. Joseph had a garden tomb and asked for the body. The Jews made sure it was sealed with a large stone and guarded by soldiers. They wanted to make sure no one could get to his body. Since it was nearly night, the other women and I planned to come back after the Sabbath to anoint the body with spices.

That Sabbath was one of the longest days I can remember. All the events of the past three years kept playing over and over in my mind, especially the last few days. If Jesus was truly the Son of God, how could this have happened? But who else could have healed so many people and performed so many miracles? None of this made sense. But I was determined to show this final act of love. Nothing could keep me away from his tomb.

As we approached, we tried to figure out who would roll the stone away for us. Maybe the soldiers would have pity on this small group of women. But when we arrived, we found the stone was already moved; and the soldiers were nowhere in sight.

There was confusion and more tears as we realized Jesus’ body was nowhere to be found. And through my haze, I heard a voice say, “Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”

“Sir,” I spoke, “if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.”

Then he spoke my name. “Mary.”

Instantly, I knew. It was Jesus. He was alive. But how? I tried to hold on to him, but he wouldn’t let me because he had not yet ascended to the Father. But he gave me these instructions:

“Go and find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

And now my heart is dancing. I have joy untold because Jesus is alive. He’s alive! I have seen him and he is alive! [*runs out*]

[*Blackout*]

***Embracing the Uncertain***

**Lenten Sermon – Easter Service**

***The Proof of the Resurrection***

April 12, 2020

“When God Calls You by Name”

by Rev. Magrey deVega

[Based on *Embracing the Uncertain*, by Magrey R. deVega

Chapter 7: *The Empty Tomb and the Proof of the Resurrection*]

**Scripture:** John 20:1-18

Christ is risen!

[*Congregation responds,* “Christ is risen, indeed!”]

Yep!

That’s part of the problem. Apparently, you already know the good news before I even shared it. The truth of the matter is, you know what this day is all about. We wouldn’t be gathering here on this morning if Jesus was still in the tomb. There would be no reason to have Easter if the resurrection wasn’t real. You already know the news! So that begs the question: What possible surprise could there be on a day like today?

By the time we get to John’s version of the resurrection, we’ve already heard it! We’ve had to get through Matthew, Mark, and Luke to get there. They’ve already shared the news with us. Jesus is alive! He wasn’t in the tomb. He’s been raised. The resurrection is real. So we might beg the question of John: What possible surprise could you have for us today? What news could there be that we haven’t heard? Is it still possible for God to surprise us?

John would want us to believe that there is. Regardless of how many Easter services you have been to, God would want us to hold out the possibility that there is still room for a surprising word for you and me today.

The thing is, in John’s version of the gospel, he is really interested in delaying exactly what that surprise is supposed to be. By the time we get to the Easter story in John 20, John has changed a little in his narrative style. He has gone from being a gospel writer to a mystery writer. All of a sudden he becomes Agatha Christie or a screen writer for “CSI” or “Law and Order.”

The setting for the mystery in John 20 is, of course, the empty tomb—the place where they laid Jesus’ body just a couple days before. The first detective to appear on the scene is Nancy Drew, played by Mary Magdalene, and she discovers the first bit of evidence. Exhibit A: The stone has been rolled away. That giant stoned which they used to seal the entrance to the tomb to keep people from getting into it had been rolled away.

It catches Nancy Drew (Mary Magdalene) by surprise, so she runs back home and fetches backup detectives. The first backup detective, Columbo, shows up, played perfectly by Simon Peter, as well as another detective (another disciple). We never really find out his name, but we can fairly assume that it was John, the gospel writer himself, given the way that this second detective is described as, “the one whom Jesus loved” (John 20:2)…, and a few verses later as “the one who could run faster than Peter”… I guess if you’re writing a gospel for yourself, you get to describe yourself any way you want!

So John pokes his head into the tomb and finds the second piece of evidence. Exhibit B: The burial linens used to drape the body of Jesus are lying flat in the tomb without a body present. Then Peter sticks his head in the tomb and finds the third piece of evidence. Exhibit C: The head linen used to shroud the face of Jesus was rolled up neatly in another part of the tomb.

Three unmistakable bits of evidence there, laying the case before you, and you would think that it would be at this moment that the surprise would be up, that the great news would be revealed and there would be nothing else to say. We would think at this moment that the resurrection would become plain and clear to the disciples. At least, that’s the way it would be if we were reading Matthew, Mark and Luke.

But not here. John is not quite ready yet to give us the big reveal. In John’s gospel (despite all of the evidence), Mary, Peter and John come to the wrong conclusion: The body of Jesus has been stolen. Talk about a “double-whammy.” This would be the worst possible explanation because not only will they have just gone through the grief of saying goodbye to Jesus on Good Friday, but now they have the second layer of complication of having to come face-to-face with this epic scandal of the theft of his body. Poor Mary! Not only has she lost Jesus once to death, now she has lost Jesus a second time in grief. That’s why long before John is even ready to share the news of the resurrection; he wants to be very clear about what Mary was feeling. In verse 11 we are told that Mary stood outside the tomb weeping.

The next thing that happens is two angels appear. We would rightfully think that once the angels appear, that’s when the surprise is going to be up. That’s how it would be in Matthew, Mark and Luke! When the angels are there, they are the ones to say, “Do not fear! He’s not there. He’s gone ahead of you. The resurrection is real!” But not in John’s gospel. In John’s gospel the angels appear not to reveal the resurrection, but to confirm Mary’s grief. They ask her (v. 13), “Woman, why are you weeping?” She says to them, “Because they have stolen away the body of my Lord.”

Why? Why is John so reluctant to stretch out the suspense? Why is he so interested in sharing this mystery with us? Just get right to the good news! Clearly you already know it. But maybe John wants to push the brakes for a second not only to allow this story to breathe, but to allow you and me to find ourselves in it. Maybe John is saying to all of us this morning that if you look carefully and if you listen carefully to what’s happening here, you will find yourself standing right there next to Mary.

Right here this morning, I can’t possibly know all of the various stories and situations you bring into this chapel. All I know is that many of us—if not most of us—also feel like something has been stolen from us. Ask yourself the question: Do you feel like your life has been stolen by your fears and in your anxieties? About financial trouble or an uncertain future or an unbreakable addiction?

* Maybe we feel like our relationships have been stolen away from us by bitterness, resentment, betrayal or a reluctance to forgive.
* Maybe we feel like our innocence has been stolen, as young people fear for their lives with gun violence; as our planet tremors with the lack of care; as our world leaders are caught in an endless cycle of “one-ups-manship” and an addiction to violence and power.
* Maybe you feel like your future has been stolen by your past.
* Maybe you feel too gripped by shame and guilt for things you should not have done or second-guessing or wishful thinking.
* Or maybe the worst thing of all: maybe you feel like your life has been stolen away by death, as you come to this place grieving the loss of a loved one or even confronting your own mortality.

John is not itching to give us the big reveal yet. He wants us to stand there with Mary at the empty tomb to acknowledge just how dark that first Easter started out to be. It’s no wonder that Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. She could more easily believe in theft than in resurrection. And so can we. I really like John’s gospel and his version of the Easter story, because before he gets to the good stuff, he acknowledges how hard the stuff of life really is.

And then the gardener shows up (at least Mary *thinks* it’s the gardener). We know full well that it’s Jesus. He just shows up out of the blue—right there—face-to-face with Mary, but she doesn’t know it. And that’s part of John’s point, too. John would acknowledge that whatever we’re feeling right now, with whatever our human condition is, it’s natural and okay. But all of those fears and anxieties that we have could also blind us to the reality of the resurrection. We can be so engulfed in our darkness, as understandable as that might be right now, that we would not even notice the Light if it were standing right there next to us. Mary looks at Jesus and doesn’t even know it’s Jesus.

Not only does Mary think Jesus is the gardener, but she thinks he’s the thief! She says (v. 15), “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Mary had hit the lowest point in her life, just like many of us who are in this place right now. We’re feeling like we’re at the lowest point of our lives, too, so blinded by the darkness and engulfed by our suffering that we cannot possibly believe in any possibility of new life, new hope and resurrection.

It is there in that moment when Mary is at the lowest of the low when John finally decides it is time. It is time for the big reveal! It’s time to share that the resurrection is real. The news that we all knew would come; the news that we all knew would bring us here to this place—the part that we all came here to hear this morning, excited to hear—finally arrives! A full 15 verses into the gospel story. But here’s the surprising thing…it’s the way that John decides to reveal that news. Not with a thunderous earthquake. Not with angels speaking from on high. Not from God speaking from the heavens. Not with the sound of trumpets. If you want all that stuff—drama and special effects—you can find that in Matthew, Mark and Luke. But if you want to hear it from John, you have to listen carefully. Because the surprise this morning is the way that God shared the news with Mary, and the way God shares the news with you.

Jesus, himself, says one word that makes all the difference: “Mary.” He speaks her name. It was at that moment when Mary heard God speak her name, the fog lifted, the darkness vanished, and for the first time in a long time she knew that she was found. Her life might have felt lost and confused, but God had found her. That is the surprising news for us today! This Easter, the good news for you is that **God will stop at nothing to find you**. God is in the search and rescue business. This morning, even though you have felt lost and in the dark and blinded by your grief and fear, listen! God is calling YOU by name, and you have been found!

There was a woman who had a metal detector on the beach, sweeping the fancy little gadget left and right, listening for the beeps. Every once in a while she would stop, pull out her big strainer basket, hunch down and scoop up a big chunk of sand, and start sifting, looking for stuff people had lost. Then the woman did something amazing that you wouldn’t believe. She stopped and pulled off what appeared to be her wedding ring—probably the most valuable possession she had on her in that moment. She closed her eyes and turned her head, then threw the ring down into the sand with enough force to bury that ring down below the surface. Then she picked up that metal detector again. You see, what she was doing was making sure that her metal detector was working properly. She was so intent on finding all of the other lost treasure out on the beach that she was willing to give up her most prized possession just to make sure that her system of search and rescue was working properly.

Since the beginning of human history, God has been on a search and rescue mission, searching for:

* every lost soul,
* every person who has been wandering in the dark,
* every person who has been standing outside the tomb weeping, weeping, weeping.

God has been so intent on finding every single lost one of us that God was willing (on Good Friday) to let go of the most prized possession that God had—God’s very own self in his Son, Jesus Christ. And there he was on Good Friday where God threw Jesus down into the earth and buried him in a tomb—in the sand of human condition—to take on all of the lost-ness and darkness we feel. But then on Easter morning, God took out that strainer basket. When God raised Jesus to new life, it proved that God could find anyone and anything—including you!

After that woman slipped her wedding ring back on her finger she picked up that metal detector again. She walked a few more steps, sweeping back and forth, and then all of a sudden she heard a beep. She picked up that strainer basket, scooped up a chunk of sand and started sifting, and she found something. Something that was lost was now found!

This is why John tells us this version of the Easter gospel. With one word—one utterance of Mary’s name—Mary who was lost had been found! Surprise! That very same God, that very same Jesus, right now, is speaking your name, too. It might be hard for you to hear it: you are deafened by your trouble; you are blinded by your darkness. But if you listen carefully this morning, unmistakably, plainly and clearly, God is speaking your name and you have been found!

The only question we need to answer now is: What are we going to do about it? What difference will it make to be found by God?

If you look at what Mary said next (v. 16), Mary responded with another word: “Rabbi!” (which John reminds us means “Teacher”). It was in that moment that Mary recognized that because she has been found, she has a lot of lessons to learn from Jesus, and so do you and I. Mary’s response was to say, “Rabbi, Teacher, I’ve got so much more to learn from you.” Hers was a realization that she had so much more to learn and Jesus had so much more to teach her. Despite your doubts, it is not too late for you—regardless of your standing in life or how small your faith might appear to be—to grow in your faith and follow Jesus your Teacher and Lord.

This is the good news we knew had to be coming eventually. The other gospels would want us to hear it a lot sooner. The other gospels shared the news right away at the top of their stories. If I were preaching Matthew, Mark and Luke, this sermon would probably be only five minutes long and we could end this service and beat the Baptists to brunch!

It’s a good thing we heard from John today. John would want us to acknowledge that it’s good to be found, and it’s good to hear God speak our name. Because then, now and from now on, we can believe exactly what Mary said: “I have seen the Lord!” (v. 18).

Let’s pray together:

God, this is good news! We were expecting it; we just weren’t expecting how much we needed to hear it, or the way in which you were going to share it. So God, thank you for speaking it to us in the most personal way possible—through the speaking of our names. God, we confess to you that we have felt in the dark, lost, confused, blinded. But today, the message is unmistakable: You have found us! You have given up your most prized possession to find us. And for that we are grateful. Continue to guide us as we take whatever the next step is along our journey of faith, so that every day can be a resurrection day; that every pulse and heartbeat of our life can speak to the glory of Hallelujah! You are risen, and you raise us to new life, indeed! I pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Risen Lord, Amen!

Recorded: April 1, 2018

Hyde Park United Methodist Church

500 W. Platte St., Tampa, FL 33606