

Message for Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

Scripture: John 20: 1-18

Title: Called By Name

Welcome

Announcements: Giving Options-Easter Offering this year is dedicated to Pastor's Emergency Discretionary Fund; April is UMCOR (video with sound) Starting Fridays in May at 6PM Chick Flick Friday video viewing. May 2nd My Big Fat Greek Wedding

Fellowship of Love Song

Call to Worship

L: Christ the Lord is risen today.

P: Alleluia! Alleluia!

L: Earth and heaven in chorus say:

P: Alleluia! Alleluia!

L: Love's redeeming work is done.

P: Alleluia! Alleluia!

L: Christ has opened paradise.

P: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Unison Prayer

**All: God of life and love, we are eager to hear the good news of life.
Enter our lives and cast our fears aside.**

**Lead us on a journey from grief and despair to hope and joy.
We are ready to celebrate and give thanks for your transforming love.
We are eager to rejoice in the glory of this day!
Give us Easter spirits and open hearts. Amen.**

Offering/Song

Scripture: John 20:1-18 NRSV

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.

⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,

⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;

¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Easter Meditation: Called By Name.

He is risen! (He is risen indeed!) I am glad that so many of you know or now know that traditional response for Easter morning. This is the proclamation of our faith, that he is not dead, he is risen! And we can rejoice in that. Easter has always been my favorite church high holy day. Of course, as a kid I loved Christmas, but the older I get the more I have felt that Easter is really where we as Christians should be focused.

With that being the case I did find myself in an awkward position with this Easter proclamation. What do we do with this scripture passage? What do we say about it? I have preached this particular passage probably more times than not on Easter. It is the preferred passage for the lectionary cycle, and it is a story so well-known and read so often that even though we know it is important, it tends to go in one ear and out the other. I found myself wondering how to keep us from talking about the resurrection of Christ this morning and not just putting it away after our church service when we leave as just a nice story we tell ourselves just one day of the year.

Now there is a slightly easy way around that, and that is that I do speak about the resurrection and try to reference it at various times through the year. I know I am not always successful at it, but hey, I am only human. Reality dictates however that I have to acknowledge that I do struggle with connecting the meaning of Easter to my everyday life. Remembering this I re-examined the John passage. Wondering what our best way might be to bring the lesson of Easter to the forefront, that Christ conquered sin and death, but did it for each and every one of us.

Let me start this journey by telling stories on myself. I am bad with names. Sometimes I wonder if people realize just how bad with names I am, and Angie does not get to speak in this and neither does Katie. It is just something about names that go in one ear and out the other and I just have trouble remembering them. Someone just asked me the other day if remembering names has gotten easier since I have been teaching. Well, it is easy to remember a name if you are yelling at the student every day for behavior issues. But just two weeks ago I had to hand out slips of paper with names on them and I still got a couple of students that I have had all year mixed up.

That is not the only story I have to share with you about names. Without going into the details of my early attempts to date Katie I will share

that I did shorten her name to Kate. I know, why do you need to shorten an already shortened name, don't ask me. I was young and stupid, now I am old and stupid and share stories like this about myself. Katie hated it, and she has made me regret it off and on for the last 20 years!

When it comes to names I can be hopeless! Some people call me Jonathan, some Jon (but never J). When I was in seminary I went by my middle name, Wesley, or Wes as a few called me. That is partly why when someone gets upset that someone wants to be called a different name I just shrug, I have at least four proper names. That is not even counting the names I have been called, like Dad, pastor, brother, padre, father, reverend. And even then those are only the nice ones!

What is the point of all this? Well, that is simple, in our passage today *John 20:15-16 NRSV "Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher)." Again, I have preached on this passage many times, and I have put it back on the shelf each time. But I began to think about this week how important it is that God calls us by name. (Slide)*

In fact, just a few short chapters before Jesus shares a story in chapter 10 verses 3-5 *"The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."* (Slide) Jesus tells us that we are called by name, by him. He knows us and calls us by the name of choice, whatever that choice may be.

Here recorded on the day of his resurrection Jesus reminds us by showing us that he knows Mary's name, that he remembers and knows each of our names. While the powers of evil and death in the world are conquered and defeated, the story is not over, Jesus knows our name just like Mary and calls to us.

Now yes that is the whole point of my sermon, but I know some of you have not gotten it so let me give you another example. Right now, I have a few volunteers that are going to hand you a cookie. As they are giving you the cookie I want you to look at the images on the screen. *You*

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should see an image of the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and we will include Pluto because we are Arizona and Arizona discovered it. There is one more image of the entire solar system to look at now. (Individual planet slides and solar system)

So, in your hand you have an Oreo, do not eat it yet, you can in a few moments. Hold your Oreo in your hand. Imagine going down to a microscopic level, to a microscopic particle of sugar located at the center of this Oreo. That microscopic molecule of sugar is the sun. The outer edge of the cookie, which knurled edge. That is where Pluto is. I hope this helps give you perspective of the vast amount of space just in our solar system, I am not evening going out into the universe. Do you know what this means?

It means that the God who's hand is in the creation of that vast solar system knows your name. That is a huge deal! This is not even speaking in depth on the theological truths of the Easter morning, the defeat of sin and death. This is purely that even in the midst of that universe shaping reality God knows your name.

I pray that you are able to remember that this day and the next, and the next. That God knows your name, calls you by name, even with the very foundations of the world being shaken, and the vast scope of distances and reality, God knows your name. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer/Lord's Prayer

Song

Benediction

Song