

Sermon for Easter Day
Sunday, April 9, 2023
“I have seen the Lord”

Text: John 20:1-18

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, & Holy Spirit. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

“Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord.’” The Gospel itself preaches the Easter message: I have seen the Lord. Just imagine the shock when Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the other disciple whom Jesus loved—that would be John—arrived at the tomb on the third day only to find that Jesus was gone! They were afraid to go in. John, whom Jesus charged from the Cross with the care of his mother, didn’t go in. Peter went in to find the linen wrappings that enshrouded the body of Jesus rolled up in a bundle. I can only imagine what was going through their minds. They thought somebody had stolen the body of Jesus. But Mary Magdalene saw Jesus. She thought he was the gardener until he spoke to her, and then she ran to tell the others, “I have seen the Lord!”

The first proclamation of the Resurrection was offered by a woman—not the disciples who followed Jesus, not the one who was at the cross and charged with the care of Mary the Mother of Jesus, the beloved disciple. It was Mary Magdalene, who went to the tomb, probably with spices and ointments to finish the final burial process, since she could not do it on the Sabbath. She proclaimed the Gospel message first, and that is a message to us as well, that we are all to go out into the world and proclaim the Easter message, “I have seen the Lord.”

What does that mean for us, when we say, “I have seen the Lord”? How do we proclaim the good news? I see many here today, more than on any other Sunday, who have come because it’s Easter. This is a special day for us. Many have returned to the place where they grew up to be with family and friends because this is a special day. Many have returned to the church you grew up in, even though we are in a different place or have a different name, because this is a special day. What do you expect to find here? God, I hope. I hope you came to meet Jesus who will become real and present to us in the Blessed Sacrament. But then when you leave today, how will you proclaim the Easter message: I have seen the Lord?

We tend to be timid about proclaiming this message, don’t we? I bet if we had gone to a Mets or Yankees game we’d be telling all our friends about it. If we go to a great concert or see the latest blockbuster movie, we can’t wait to tell folks all about it. When we see something on the news that just blows us away we can’t wait to tell it. Nowadays, we post it on Facebook. We start lengthy threads of comments from our numerous friends when we should be getting our work done. But how many of us will

post on our Facebook pages what a great time we had at church this morning? How many of us will tell our friends, “I have seen the Lord”?

What does it mean to say, “I have seen the Lord”? Those of us here who believe can say that he was in our very midst, that we held him in our hands and consumed his presence in the consecrated bread and wine. But how else do we say we have seen him? We are renewed and reinvigorated through the Blessed Sacrament to embody the presence of Christ out in the world—to project the image of God in who we are, what we do, how we treat those in our families, our friends, and our neighbors. In receiving the Presence of Christ, our faith is reinforced, our hope is renewed, and our lives are refreshed. But as we meet Christ here in this place, our eyes are reopened to be able to see Christ in others. Look around. See how God is moving in our world.

Even in the midst of trouble, we can see God present in our midst. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John were grieving when they got up that first Easter morning to go to the tomb of Jesus and finish the burial process, but in the midst of their grief, they saw God moving in their midst and they saw the empty tomb, the linen shroud bundled in a heap, for Jesus had been raised! Whatever is going on in your life, you can still see the presence of God if you look. Also look for the light of Christ dwelling in the other people you meet. Wherever you find yourself on the hilly path of life and whomever you encounter, you can still proclaim, “I have seen the Lord.”

The Easter message is that the good news be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. There is reason to rejoice, for Christ has been raised. There is reason to rejoice, because in the Resurrection salvation has been secured for all humanity. There is reason to rejoice, because Christ is present in our midst in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. There is reason to rejoice, because God continues to move in our midst. There is reason to rejoice, because we are reminded that like Mary Magdalene, an ordinary human, we, too, can proclaim the good news: I have seen the Lord!

Alleluia, Christ is risen!