

After a Sabbath spent in mourning for her Lord, Mary comes early in the day on the first day of the week, the first day she could come, to continue to grieve this loss that has left an empty place in her heart and her life. She comes while it is still dark. She's lost, she's grievously sad, she's alone.

And as she arrives at the tomb she sees the stone rolled away and in her stunned amazement she draws the only conclusion that she is able to draw, They've taken his body. She draws a logical conclusion, based on her experience, based on assumptions, based on what she knows of her world and the people in it. Her whole experience through the last several days has been one long dark journey of betrayal, unfairness, injustice, lies and deceit. Perhaps that is the story of her whole life. So why wouldn't this just be more of the same, more lies, more deceit and more injustice. When she sees the empty tomb, she goes to what she knows, or thinks she knows, telling Simon Peter and the beloved disciple. **"They have taken my Lord and I don't know where they've laid him."**

Then, after they have all returned to the tomb and the two have confirmed that indeed, Jesus is not there, Mary stays weeping—continuing to grieve. Looking into the tomb and seeing the two angels she answers their question, still sure of the perfidy that has occurred, **"They have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid him."** She says this to two *angels*, and still the possibility of a radical new thing has not broken through her confidence that the world is acting in the way the world has always acted. In a way that cheats her of hope, that cheats her of possibility, that cheats her of a life-giving love.

And finally, she encounters Jesus, but she doesn't see him. She doesn't know him. She assumes again that he is connected to this theft of Jesus body. Like the angels, he asks her why she weeps. And Mary responds again, "***Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him.***" Enough already with this long night of sorrow, of shame, of hatred, of lies and deceit. Just give me the body so we who loved him can grieve in peace. Enough already!

But Jesus breaks through her assurance that the world is operating the way that it always has. Jesus breaks through her assumptions that these long days of sorrow and pain will continue to oppress her. Jesus breaks through her confidence that she is again being cheated. Jesus breaks through all of that to call her by name and to call her to a new way of seeing, a new way of knowing, a new way of understanding. Jesus calls her by name, "Mary," he says. And then she hears him, she sees him, she knows him. "Rabbouni" she breaths back.

And in that moment all her assumptions fall away.

In that moment hope returns.

In that moment, love is real

In that moment she comes to know with all of her being that the promise is true.

And alive with hope, with love and with the fullness of the promise, she runs back to the disciples, announcing,

"I have seen the Lord!"

"I have seen the Lord!"

Well, I am here to tell you today, I have seen the Lord!

Hope returns!

The love of God is real!

The promise is true!

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

There are times when we journey through what can seem to be the long dark days of betrayal, unfairness, injustice, lies and deceit. We wrap ourselves in the cocoon of our assumptions, sure that the world will work in the way the world always has, sure that we will be cheated of hope, cheated of possibility, cheated of life-giving love. We long for something else, but our view of the world is closed in by what we think we have known, what we think we have seen, what we think we have been able to understand.

But I'm here to tell you this Easter Sunday morning, I have seen the Lord, and you have too! I have been called by name in the waters of baptism and you have been too! This world we live in often seems guided only by lies, deceit and injustice, but we are called to a new way of seeing, a way that breaks the bonds of brokenness, a way that brings redemption, reconciliation and new life, a way that breaks into this world of old assumptions with radical possibility, a way that calls us back out into the world with a message of hope and love and promise, a way that says, I have seen the Lord—and you have too.

We proclaim this every Sunday through our liturgy. We proclaim it as we speak together the words of our worship, new each Sunday, but written forever on our hearts and in our minds after sharing them together week after week, year after year. The words

of a lifetime proclaiming a gospel message that is spoken anew each Sunday, spoken to life each Sunday, spoken as life giving and healing words to a broken world each Sunday.

We speak it as we call for peace and mercy in the Kyrie. We speak it as we praise God in the Gloria. We speak it as we give thanks to God after the reading of scripture. Together we say, “I have seen the Lord.”

Together we speak our faith out loud as we say the words of the creed. We believe in God. We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in the Holy Spirit. We speak life into faith as we lift our words together in this community and as those words speak the promise we know when we say, “I have seen the Lord.”

Together we speak our faith out loud as we speak the conversation that is the Eucharistic liturgy—sharing back and forth the good news that is proclaimed in the bread and wine. In that conversation we say to one another, “I have seen the Lord.”

Together we speak our faith in prayer as we pray the prayer of the day, the prayers of intercession, prayers of thanksgiving for our gifts and the prayer that Jesus taught us. In each of these prayers we say, “I have seen the Lord.”

Together at the rail, we act out our faith as we share in this common meal—This common meal of ordinary food and drink. Together at the rail we receive the bread and wine and again can say, with all truth, “I have seen the Lord.”

And together we walk through those doors and out into a world that draws conclusions based only on experience, based only on available evidence, based on the confidence that people will act the way they have always acted, with betrayal, unfairness, injustice, lies and deceit. Together we walk out into a world filled with people who knows only what they think they know, who believe only what they think they have seen,

who feel they have been cheated—cheated of hope, cheated of possibility, cheated of a life-giving love.

Having heard again the promise of Easter, having encountered Jesus anew in the word and the meal, we walk out into the world with a different message. We walk into the world saying, “I have seen the Lord, and you can too. I have been called by name and you have been too. I used to see through only old assumptions, old ways of seeing—sure that the world will work the way it always has, but now I see new, know I know a new thing, now I understand that hope returns, that love is real and that the promise is true.”

As Easter people, as people who live each day on the sure foundation of the cross and resurrection, we know we are not bound to the rules the world often chooses to live by. We can live in a radically new way. A way that proclaims Jesus in our words as we joyfully share with others the news that has transformed our lives. And a way that proclaims Jesus in our actions—as we make choices that lift up those who struggle, that give voice to the voiceless, that support those who lack the resources we have. We proclaim Jesus when we live life abundantly as those God has called by name.

Together we go into the world to speak a promise that will bring new life to a broken world. Together we go into the world to live a promise that will bring hope to a world that seeks to believe. Together we go into the world to embody the love of Jesus made real through the cross and resurrection.

Together we say, “I have seen the Lord and you can too!”

Alleluia, Chris is Risen!

He is risen Indeed, Alleluia!