

The Reverend Renee L. Fenner
St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church
Easter Sunday/Year A
April 16, 2017
Text: John 20:1-18

“Mary”

*Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
Suffer to redeem our loss, Alleluia!*

God's grace and peace be with you this Easter morn!

I wonder if Mary believed any of it. You know, the part about the third day. Jesus spoke about it more than once. But now it was all over.

On the day of the resurrection and while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene managed to make her way to the tomb. She had not been herself since witnessing the suffering and death of her friend. She had been with Jesus ever since the day he came into her life. She had clung to his every word. She had seen him do miraculous things in the lives of others. Then three days ago she had watched him die. She watched as they rolled the stone in place. She heard the finality of it when stone met stone with a great thud. What would life be without him? Was all hope lost? The dreams envisioned too? Would the emptiness ever go away?

The feelings she felt were not uniquely her own. His disciples felt it too. They had hidden themselves away in fear and anguish ever since that fateful night in Gethsemane. And even when Mary found the stone rolled away only Peter and the other disciple came running to see if her claim was true. Though they saw the linens lying there it is not clear what these two men believed. And they went away for as John said: “they did not understand the scripture.”

And Mary was left alone once more and she wept long and hard-her weariness and grief so great that in her confusion she does not recognize the One who spoke to her.

Then Jesus said her name. Mary.

Only then did she know, only then does she believe. Only then does she know that hope was not lost. That dreams can come to fruition and promises are fulfilled. That she would never feel emptiness like that ever again.

All because Jesus called her by name: Mary.

Yours is the name that Jesus speaks as he reveals himself today. On this Easter morning the darkness is dispelled and Christ's light shines bright.

And we can believe in the joy of his resurrection. We can believe that Good Friday really happened. That Jesus suffered and died and that his body was laid in the tomb. We can believe that sometime in the darkness on the third day, Christ rose and shook off his burial clothes. The great stone rolled away. Death did not hold him. Death did not win. Love won and Jesus lives.

We can believe it because Jesus did it all for you and for me. The living, risen Christ speaks to each of us now. He calls us each by name...

He calls us in all the ups and downs of this life. He speaks to us when we feel alone and weary. When our tears threaten to drown our hopes and wash away our dreams. When words seem to be empty promises. When emptiness threatens to take hold of our joy.

Jesus bade Mary to go and tell the other disciples what she had seen and heard. Then Jesus himself appeared to them opening their minds to "understand the scriptures." He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:45-48)."

For them and for us, it isn't enough to shout and sing "*Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!*"

You and I are to make our way into places that have yet to experience the light that dispels the darkness. Into the world that longs for newness of life, of Easter joy and promises. Into the world that struggles be loosed from its burial clothes. Into the world that needs to know that an empty tomb means life everlasting. That the real scoop on Easter does not rest in jelly beans and chocolate bunnies.

In his Easter message, our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, had this to say: *Jesus entered the city (Jerusalem) at the same time as Pilate to show them, and to show us, that God has another way. That violence is not the way. That hatred is not the way. That brute force and brutality are not the way.*

Jesus came to show us there is another way. The way of unselfish, sacrificial love. That's why he entered Jerusalem. That's why he went to the cross. It was the power of that love poured out from the throne of God, that even after the horror of the crucifixion would raise him from death to life.

God came among us in the person of Jesus to start a movement. A movement to change the face of the earth. A movement to change us who dwell upon the earth. A movement to change the creation from the nightmare that is often made of it into the dream that God intends for it.

He didn't just happen to be in Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. He went to Jerusalem for a reason. To send a message. That not even the titanic powers of death can stop the love of God. On that Easter morning, he rose from the dead, and proclaimed love wins.

Love wins.

Carol. Susan. Dennis... All of this is what you and I are to proclaim boldly and unashamedly. Not only in words but with our lives.

"Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!"

*Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save, Alleluia!*