

“I’ve Seen the Lord”

April 24, 2022
King City United Church
York United Ministries
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

Living God, by your Holy Spirit, open our eyes to see the new light of this day; open our lips to tell of the empty tomb; open our hearts to believe the good news; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Readings

John 20:10-18

¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene ¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). ¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

This is word of Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God.

< Children's Time >

Hello, my friends, I expect you have done the Lent Reading. How many of you finished the Lent Reading? Or how many of you, at least, tried to do the Lent Reading? I hope you had quality time to reflect on the Bible and our ecological crisis. Besides the Lent Reading, what do you do on Easter and Easter Monday? Do you have family time, movie day, eat turkey, gather with family and friends? Or just play unlimited video games? Last Holy Week, Sean suddenly approached me and asked, "Dad, Easter is about Jesus' resurrection?" "Oh yes, absolutely, my dear. Easter is about Jesus' resurrection." Then Sean paused a moment. He seemed a bit confused. I'm telling you. Easter is all about Jesus' resurrection. "Jesus is risen." "Jesus is risen, indeed!"

<Reflection>

"Jesus is risen!" "Jesus is risen, indeed!" Bible has some records about Easter. In the Gospel of John for today, we are aware that the writer of Gospel John focuses on two characters; Peter and Mary. It says Mary went to the tomb and found Jesus' body disappeared. She went back to the place where the disciples gathered and informed this to the disciples. Peter and the other disciple rushed to the tomb to check what Mary said. Peter promptly walked into the empty tomb and went back home with disappointment. Mary stayed longer and wept for the loss, and yet, she met the resurrected Jesus and had a short conversation with him at the scene. Actually, the other disciple who ran over with Peter was John, and Mary accompanied two other women, named Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, who is the mother of the sons of Zebedee; their names are in Gospel Mark chapter 16. It is not crystal clear that Mary, the mother of James, and Salome were at the scene of the conversation between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. But the point is, the writer of the Gospel John mainly

focuses on Peter and Mary Magdalene on the first morning of the resurrection.

We know relatively well of Peter, but who is Mary Magdalene? In the very first moments of Jesus' movement, the role of women was essential. Although the Bible mostly records men's ministries, the impact and influence of women's ministries are equally important, and the Gospels provide some hints to the readers, especially related to Jesus' last ministries. On the day of Jesus' crucifixion, three women and many other women witnessed Jesus' crucifixion. Their names are particularly remembered: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of little James, and Salome.

Jesus died on Friday, and the women who followed Jesus from Galilee saw Jesus was laid down in the tomb and bitterly wept while going back home. That was Friday afternoon. The next day was Saturday, which was the Sabbath. The women rested, preparing spices and ointments in accordance with the Jewish Law. And the very next day, early in the morning, which is Sunday morning, they visited the tomb to apply the spices and ointments. And the three brave women are Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. Why brave? Because the Roman Empire ordered the tomb to be guarded and was ready to persecute Christians to death, and most Jews and their authorities were trying to capture scapegoats. We may recall that even disciple Peter denied Jesus three times in front of the people. These three ladies approached the tomb with brave hearts. And it was their second visit. Now, after witnessing Jesus' resurrection, the twelve disciples and Jesus' followers started spreading the good news of the resurrection. Here are the names of the women who significantly contributed to the ministry: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Salome.

These three people must have had a very special relationship with Jesus. They are mothers of Jesus' 12 disciples or have received divine grace from Jesus. They started following Jesus from the very first moments of Jesus' public life in Galilee and hadn't given up following Jesus until he died. They followed Jesus even though most of Jesus' twelve male disciples betrayed and ran away from Jesus. We can tell how enthusiastic they were to follow Jesus. They all had passion and enthusiasm. Due to their courage and enthusiasm, the news of Jesus' resurrection was able to be initially unveiled.

Mary Magdalene is the most important key person in the women's ministry, so, as I said, Gospel John solely focuses on her story in the garden of the tomb. It was Jesus' very first revelation after his resurrection. What made her so honourable as to be the first witness of Jesus' resurrection? Today's passage also hints that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a unique relationship. When she realized that the person whom she was talking to was Jesus, she instantly tried to get closer and hold Jesus. Jesus didn't allow it, but we can sense the intimacy.

As you know, Mary Magdalene had such a dramatic life-changing story because of Jesus. She had been captured by seven demons, but after being healed by Jesus, she became a passionate follower and agent of Jesus. Because of her own life-changing story, she was able to confidently testify Jesus as the Messiah of herself and of the world. And her confident belief made her unique and special in that she received God's grace to witness the resurrected Jesus for the first time over any other disciple.

From the story of Mary Magdalene, who had her own intimate relationship with Jesus, I hope we all may have a personal story of Jesus and

the resurrected Jesus. Jesus gives the triumphant victory over death that we cannot overcome and pours the power of true eternal life on us. However, if we get this doctrinal knowledge without a personal story, personal confidence, and personal relationship with the resurrected Jesus, we may easily be tempted and challenged. When we have a personal story, personal confession, and personal faith to testify Jesus' resurrection, we can know and understand Jesus more and join the authentic depth of divine plan and wisdom.

Sisters and brothers, let's build the relationship with the resurrected Jesus. Without your personal story, doctrinal learning would probably be vague or futile. Be a person who confidently lives out the testimony of the empty tomb. Find the resurrected Jesus in your life, in your death, and in all things. Then, soon, you may find that the resurrected Jesus has been looking for you for a long time in your garden, where you have spent your whole lifetime. I hope you can exclaim, like Mary Magdalene, "I've seen the Lord!" Let us pray silently and meet the resurrected Jesus for the first time again.