

Scripture Text: John 20:1-18

Title: Listen, there is One who is calling your name...

Rev. Sharon Smith

An invitation to:

- Listen in the ordinary moments of life, as the Risen Christ calls us by name and we recognize in Christ our true selves.
- Not to hold onto known ways, and follow Jesus in the path of letting go, in order to embrace the transformative present.

Prayer:

Open us, O God, like tombs

giving way to your light, to your possibilities and to your grace.

Amen

“Mary!”

I never fail to be drawn into the moment when Jesus calls out her name: “Mary!”

Today we are invited to reflect on a profoundly personal encounter with the Risen Christ.

The author, St John, creatively expresses this moment by moving us from:

- Generality to the specific,
- from past tense into the present, and
- from the public to the personal.

At the sound of her name, this woman, unnamed before angels, unnamed before a gardener...
... is seen and known.

“Mary!”

Christ knows her. Christ sees her.

And now Christ asks her to see herself as he does.

Not any woman, But “Mary”.

Mary Magdalene has been the projection of many in the history of Christianity:

- The one who tempted Jesus,
- The one who was a repentant prostitute,
- The one who was possessed by demons.
- A woman out of place among those called to be disciples

In the Gospel of Thomas, Peter announces: “Mary should leave us, for women are not worthy of this life”.

Cynthia Bourgeault - The Wisdom of Jesus

Yet in our gospel today... She is seen by the Risen Christ...

- as one who was steadfast through the entire crucifixion and burial
- as one who is the first to witness Jesus in resurrected form
- And as one who says yes to being all that she was made to be:
a bearer of good news to others (an ‘apostle of apostles’)
a preacher,
an embodiment of the love and wisdom of Jesus.

This encounter with the Risen Christ became one of **Mary's** resurrection moments. In that garden she is given a seed of her uniqueness that begins to grow.

“Mary!”

For how easy it is for us to “succumb to other people’s definition of who we are, and [to] lose our sense of ourselves”.

For deep within us lies a hidden wholeness, the core of our humanity

- some call it our true self
- Bhuddists call it our Big self
- Quakers call it our Inner teacher or our inner light
- Hasidic Jews call it a spark of the Divine
- Others call it identity or integrity
- People often call it soul.

Parker Palmer “A Hidden Wholeness”

And if like Mary, we too listen for the call of our names: “Sharon!” “John!” “Monica!”

We can be reminded of who we are... What we are looking for...
The layers that others have put on us, melt away.
And we walk again free to be fully ourselves.
In a mysterious encounter.

Perhaps the Risen Christ meets us in a dream,
or in a person who sees us fully,
or in a silent moment of meditation or prayer,
or in the sunrise on Easter morning,
or even on a long walk to cool down after feeling shamed by a boss, partner, or friend.
or in the stillness of a graveyard.

Friends, our assumptions of a closed, three dimensional universe can close our eyes to the spiritual possibilities that are all around us, everywhere to be experienced.

Mary was intent on finding only a material, physical body.
Little did she know, that the Gardener would open up a spiritual reality that would transform her and through her the world around her.

In every encounter, we can find the Risen Christ present and personal to us.
A life lived with wonder, where the Spiritual infuses everything.

Richard Wagamese, An Ojibway Elder writes this:

“At dawn each day, I creep from my bedroom down the hall to the kitchen, where I set my tea to brew and then move to the living room to wait. In the immaculate silence, I watch the world unfurl from shadow. I listen to the sounds of birds, the wind along the eaves, the creek of the floorboards and joists and rafters in this small house I call my home.”

“When the tea is ready, I cradle the cup in my palms and inhale the scent of lavender. I place the cup on the living room table. Then I rise to retrieve the bundle that holds the sacred articles of my ceremonial life. I open it and remove my smudging bowl, my eagle wing fan, my rattle and the four medicines of my people: sage, sweet grass, tobacco and cedar.”

“Then I light them using a wooden match and waft the smoke around and over my head and heart and body.... And I ask to be guided through the day with the memory of this sacred time... and then I pick up the role Creator has asked me to play in this reality”

In Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations

And so it is in our Christian tradition there is water, there is bread, there is wine, there is fire, there is smoke, there is wood. Ordinary things speak to us of the Spiritual.

In this place and in all places we are called to inhabit.

And in mystical moments

- Generalities become Personal
- And we find ourselves in the transformative present

“Mary!”

She turned around. And the landscaper was Christ.

And she replied in the common language: “Teacher”

Jesus said to her: “Do not hold on to me!”

And friends this is our mysterious invitation... Do not hold on!

- Do not hold onto what we already think we know about ourselves or about the universe around us.
- Do not hold onto our assumptions of God. For God is a continuing event in our lives.
- Do not hold onto others words and forgo our own unique calling.

For like Mary, Jesus trusts us.

To weep for injustice.
To seek truth always.
To linger in hard places.
To see Christ everywhere.
To let go assumptions.
And to be willing to learn.

“For this is your life calling to you
from a place you could never have dreamed.

For in the places of letting go, the places of small deaths,
you will hear the living call your name.”

From a poem by Jan Richardson

Amen.