

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

April 20, 2025



“RABBOUNI!”

exclaiming the intimacy of the resurrection

by Drew Downs

It is really easy to intellectualize the Easter story. In pulpits this week, we will hear the story told of the disciples racing to the tomb and Mary's encounter with Jesus. We will hear about the empty tomb, resurrection, and what it all means for Christian theology. Easter is our richest and most important holy day. And yet, among these responses are alternative visions of what it means to follow Jesus, to relate to him, not as an idea to believe, but as a co-participant in living.

Mary's response to the moment of intimacy, of revelation, when she is known and named, is to call Jesus what she calls him. He is her teacher and that is what she calls him. Then she calls him Lord. But the intimate title, the one she exclaims in surprise, the one she knows him by is teacher. He is other things, but this is how she knows him. And I suspect that Rabbouni is therefore as significant a claim as Lord. For our relationship with Jesus is also more than worship.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Resurrection

As we prepare for the Sunday we call Easter, which is also the Feast of the Resurrection, I want to invite us to think about what the resurrection tells us about God *today*. It is easy for us to focus on *then* – when Jesus was raised from the dead. And we can relegate our imagination to the birth of a tradition and the singularity of the second person of the Trinity. But what happens when resurrecting becomes a reflection of who God is?

In practice, much of our common life together in the 21st Century is full of selective resurrections. People die and are gone forever, but brands and companies can be resurrected. So can nations and ideologies.

Much of our common life seems to be spent arguing over what we preserve or conserve – what is worth saving from the chopping block or protecting from extinction. Political campaigns involve ambiguous claims of restoring former greatness or protecting ways of life while we follow a messiah who embodies God's willingness to bring the dead to life.

How might we embrace a more generous vision of life embodied in the resurrection of Jesus? That God is willing to breathe life into what humans willingly destroy? That our own impulses, fears, and desires condemn? And what does it say about us when we don't believe in this character of God's?

As we prepare to proclaim "Christ is risen!" let us ask ourselves what else might join him? What else might rise? And how might we be witnesses to it? For our work is to proclaim God's resurrecting glory – in word and deed. And there is much for us to witness.

With love,
Drew+

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FOR SUNDAY

Easter

April 20, 2025

Collect

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know

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where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflection

Jesus calls Mary by name and only then can she recognize Jesus. The man standing before her *should* be recognizable; after all, it doesn't say he changed his appearance. Maybe he shaved! Probably not, though. But because a third of our brain is devoted to dealing with sight and because Western culture has placed it at the top of the hierarchy since Aristotle, we treat seeing as inherent to believing. But Mary hears her name and then can see Jesus.

How we perceive our environment through all of our senses working in concert has a way of helping us know what we are encountering for sure. But I think we can all think of times when we've been "tricked" by an illusion or had a memory come flooding over our reality when we smelled something.

What happens for Mary, however, is not an illusion or a memory, but a jolt of a reality she can't truly imagine being true. Even as Jesus tried to prepare her for it. But it was the intimacy, of her name, familiarity, comfort, of place and memory and affection, and he invites her to see him, not only as she remembers or as he was the last time she saw him, taken down from the cross, but as he is. Now, very much alive.

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