



“The Risen One Calls Us by Name”

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Scripture (NRSV):

John 20:1-16

20 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. ² 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.” ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look^[a] into the tomb; ¹² 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. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew,^[b] “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

Sermon:

You heard it. This morning, as she was baptized, she said her name. She claimed that name. She knows herself by that name. She is at home in her own skin, with that name.

But there are names, and then there are “names”.

There are the names that we hear whispered about us, and those names wound us.

There are the names that we whisper about ourselves, and we wound ourselves.

There are the names shouted in anger, or sneered in contempt...and those names wound us, and wound others if we use them. What of the pain we cause when we “dead name” a transgender person, going back to the name they have left behind? When we refuse to use the name that is most truly theirs? When we insist upon using a name that was wrong, was hurtful to them for years and years as they struggled to find peace within themselves? What are we doing but hurting others with wrong names when we refuse to use the pronouns they ask for and identify with?

What names have you heard in your life? Which ones do you wish you had never heard?

And, even more, what is the name you accept? The name you claim? The name that is the symbol of the real you?

For years I joked with older members of the church who wanted to call me “Pastor Andrea”; for them it seemed more fitting, perhaps more “mature”, “professional”. But this was the joke, I couldn’t be comfortable with that name. I know, I know, Andrea is my name.

But I would laugh and tell them, “oh no, please call me Andy...I was only called Andrea when I was in school with the nuns, or when I was in trouble at home.”

It is most certainly *not* the name I am comfortable with!

What name are you comfortable with?

Have you heard a voice whisper your name into your ear, and make your name sound like something wonderful?

I would give anything to hear my mother say my name again. She has been dead for 15 years. I can no longer hear her voice, the voice of love to me, saying my name, “Andy” as if it were a treasure, as if I were a treasure.

Everyone, and I mean EVERYONE, should know what that feels like, sounds like!

We may spend a long time waiting. But EVERYONE should hear that when their name is spoken!

I wonder if Mary of Magdala had spent a lifetime waiting, and then, as a follower of Jesus, she had heard her name, finally, spoken in love. The syllables of her name being said as a treasure, something beautiful, something wonderful.

I don't know, I may have taken my mother's voice of love, her naming me, year in and year out...I may have taken her for granted.

Maybe Mary did, too.
But then she lost that loving voice.
She saw him die.

She saw where his body was laid.
She knew that loving voice that said her name so well, was gone, forever.
Like my mother's voice, gone forever.

Not so, not so for her!
Resurrection morning was another dim day for Mary, when it began.

But then, the voice she knew, and that knew her so well, and loved her so dearly, was heard again.
Saying her name; calling to her in the voice of love, acceptance, joy.
Against all sense, against all thought and reason and common sense, she heard that voice and her name...and then, she knew who it was. For the voice of love that says her name and mine and yours, will always be recognized.

And perhaps like Mary we will say, "O beloved Teacher/O dear Friend"! Our hearts will always leap, our smiles will come out, our joy will spring up from our inner-most self...when we hear the voice that loves us, and names us.

There is one who loves you, and names you, and recognizes you...all of you, all of you in your unique and wonderful YOU-NESS.
Sees your specialness, sees your goofiness, sees your hurt, sees your vulnerability, sees your angers or fears...sees you and calls your name as if...**as if your name was beautiful, a treasure. Because in fact, you are.**

And you, the you with the name you know that is truly You, the name that makes sense to you...you are known and you are loved.

Greater than death, is that love.

Stronger than the bonds of death, is that love.

Louder than the screams of death, is the voice that speaks to us, calls us by name, tells us we are beautiful, wonderful, delightful; that we are loved.

It is Easter.

Rejoice.

Because the Risen One calls you by your true name.

And in listening to that call, you realize that you are loveable.

And love is stronger than death.

Our Risen Christ tells us so. This morning is a sign that we can lay aside all the wrong names, the hurtful names, the mistaken names and hear the true name:
When we are called by Christ our God.

And like Mary we can turn and say, “my dear friend, beloved Teacher”.

Then, no more hiding, no more shrinking away, no more sadness...but joy, and courage and strength.

Gifts of knowing we are loved. And named. And cherished in a bond of love that is stronger than death.

Isaiah 25:6-9 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.