Benediction: Risen Lord, Open our eyes that we may seen the Lord and demonstrate that seeing to others. I speak in the Name of the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Amen.

On that morning after an encounter in which Jesus discloses His true self to her, Mary goes to the locked room where the disciples are hiding and says, “I have seen the Lord.”

Those five words are the heart of the Easter revelation[[1]](#endnote-1) and the heart of our lives as followers of the living Christ. We have seen the Lord, the same Lord, who is Lord of all – Jew and Gentile, man and woman, white and nonwhite, rich and poor, thief and patron, old and young.

To see the Lord means to see him with eyes of faith, to know Jesus for who He is, to have had an encounter with Him and to be have been changed by that encounter. When Mary encounters Jesus, Jesus shows compassion to her as she weeps. He calls her name even when she fails to understand the workings of God. Scholars suggest that Jesus appeared to Mary first because she was the one who most needed to see him.[[2]](#endnote-2) I’m not sure I totally buy that interpretation, although her need is real. I think perhaps Jesus appeared to her first because she stayed behind to seek Him, rather than running off to be with the others. Or perhaps because Jesus saw her deep love for Him. The verb used to describe her tears is the same word used to describe the wailing of the mourners at Lazarus’ grave – the traditional Middle Eastern death wail from the depths of her broken heart. But either way – because of her need or because of her persistence or because of her love – Jesus reaches out to her and discloses who He really is, just as Jesus reaches out to us in our need, our persistence, our time of brokenheartedness. He calls our name and touches our hearts with comfort and compassion.

When we feel that touch and hear Jesus call our name, and then respond to Jesus in faith, we, like Mary, have seen the Lord. The minute we turn around and respond to Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. It's the power of the resurrection—the same thing that raised Jesus from the dead …. It changes us – taking our bitterness, sadness, insecurity and fears and rolling them off.[[3]](#endnote-3) The more we see Jesus – by this I mean look at Him as Lord through faith -- the more we grow into the power of the resurrection.

There’s one more aspect to seeing Jesus that emerges in this encounter between Jesus and Mary. Seeing the Lord brings with it a challenge to tell others about Jesus. Mary becomes the first evangelist.

Jeanne Person tells this story about a boy in her Sunday School class on Sunday morning. She asked the children to tell the Easter story in their own words. The little boy told how Mary Magdalene met the risen Christ in the garden, then ran back to the locked room where the disciples were and started banging, “Open the door! Open the door! I have seen the Lord!” Open the door. Evangelism can’t get any better than that.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Mary tells the disciples to open up the doors to their hearts and hear how his voice and love opened her eyes to see Him as He truly is – loving, all-knowing, God. Jesus challenges us to run calling to our friends, family and neighbors, “Open the door to Jesus.” Jesus challenges us to call to our boss and co-workers, “Open the door to Jesus.” Jesus challenges us to call to society, “Open the door to Jesus.” We call to society with our voice and with our actions, saying “Open the Door and see Jesus.” We call to others to Open the Door not just with words, but by practicing resurrection in all aspects of our lives. We call to others by opening the doors ourselves, feeling and expressing hope amid whatever life gives us, by forgiving those who’ve hurt us and by constantly allowing those relationships to begin anew with a clean slate, by loving others as Jesus loves them. We call to secular society to open the door when we ourselves put the issues of secular society off to the side and instead stress the issues of a Kingdom society – those of justice, peace, and sharing of wealth.

In his poem “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” Wendell Berry describes our secular society as consumed with material concerns. But there is more to life than worldly desires, and he goes on to offer more gratifying experiences based on simple pleasures: “Love the Lord. Love the world. ... Ask the questions that have no answers. ... Laugh. ... Be joyful though you have considered all the facts. ... Lie easy in the shade.” In the final lines he advises: “Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection.” [[5]](#endnote-5)

Like the fox, we will make mistakes along the way and stray from the path. But ultimately, Jesus will continue to come to us, disclosing Himself to us and we will continually have opportunities to “see” Jesus better. We will have opportunities to open the doors of our hearts to grow in our faith, especially as we let go of the unnecessary things in our lives so that we can be open to what is new, unexpected, mysterious, and miraculous. We will have opportunities to shout to others through our words and actions “Open the door. I have seen the Lord.”

Amen

1. Synthesis: A Weekly Resource for Preaching and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition, PNMSI Publishing Co., Inc., April 2018, Easter B. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Dockery, D. S., Butler, T. C., Church, C. L., Scott, L. L., Ellis Smith, M. A., White, J. E., & Holman Bible Publishers (Nashville, T. (1992). *Holman Bible Handbook* (p. 629). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Nancy Guthrie, editor, *Jesus Keep Me New the Cross*. (Crossway, 2009), p. 136, Found on Preaching Today.com. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. K Jeanne Person, in Synthesis. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Wendall Barry, Manifesto, The Mad Farmer Liberation Front, *The Country of Marriage*; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), in Synthesis [↑](#endnote-ref-5)