

His Name Is Jesus, Risen from the Dead

Meta

Date: April 20, 2025

Location: Apostles Anglican Church

Readings

Acts 10:34–43 or Isaiah 51:9–11

Psalm 118:14–17, 22–24

Colossians 3:1–4 or Acts 10:34–43

John 20.1–18

Opening

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

This year we come to the garden tomb with Mary Magdalene, but I would like to begin with another Mary. Long before angels came to the empty tomb on Easter morning, angels were announcing redemption. The archangel Gabriel visited the Mother of our Lord in Nazareth, announcing to Mary that she would conceive the Son of God by the Holy Spirit. Not only did he announce that miraculous conception, Gabriel also revealed the name of the child. ‘You shall call his name Jesus.’

An angel appeared to Mary’s betrothed husband, Joseph, as well. Afraid of the shame he might suffer from Mary’s miraculous pregnancy, Joseph encountered an angel in a dream. ‘Do not fear’ the angel declared—isn’t this the persistent message of angels?—‘that which Mary has conceived,’ the angel said, ‘is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall name *his name Jesus*, for he will save his people from their sins.’¹

The child born unto us, named Jesus, was wrapped in swaddling clothes, resting in a manger within a cave. Christian tradition not only testifies that our Lord was born in a cave; if one visits the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem, one must step down and enter a cave where the manger once stood. The icons of our Lord’s nativity always depict this image of the child born Jesus, too. The cave of his birth always looks like a mouth, like darkness seeking to swallow him up. And so it was from the very beginning of his Incarnation that Hell raged against the child named Jesus.

His birth—set against darkness, set within a cave, wrapped in swaddling clothes—were all signs of his destiny. His self-emptying, his passion did not begin at Gethsemane or Golgotha. As the fathers have said, his life was one continual passion. Jesus emptied himself in love from the beginning, being born in the humiliation of a manger. He continually poured himself out for sinners until he shed his blood for us on the cross. Bound by swaddling clothes in the manger, he bound himself to us when he took

¹ Matthew 1.21

on our flesh. He bound himself to our condition, our despair, our sin, even when that meant he would descend into hell for our sake. The mouth of Bethlehem's cave represents a much darker abyss—the mouth of hell that wanted to swallow up our Lord in his flesh.

Now, look with me, my brother and sister, at the image on the cover of your bulletin. Look at the grave clothes cast aside. This is the destiny of the child who submitted to the swaddling clothes of the manger. Look at the Lord now clothed in glorious light. Look at the emptiness of the cave, how small it appears compared with the risen body of our Lord Jesus. This is what happens when the one named Jesus, the Word made flesh, enters hell. In the great Easter words of St. John Chrysostom,

You, O Hell, have been embittered by encountering Him below. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was now made captive. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven.²

Here is the triumph of the One who left Heaven, emptying himself in divine humility. Here is the destiny of the one named Jesus. Jesus' name means 'God will save,' but no one could have perceived that God would save through One whose name would become synonymous with scorn, rejection, and shame. But God named his Son, Jesus, because he would vindicate our Lord's humiliation. Because he poured himself out to death on a cross,

God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Today the Name of Jesus is vindicated. The name Jesus means not only God will save, but God exalts those who are laid low in the dust of death.

Eyewitnesses of Resurrection

Such is Mary Magdalene at the beginning of this Easter morning, laid low in the grief of death. Remember this Mary—Mary Magdalene. Here is one who has known the Lord's saving power already. Mary Magdalene was one who had been at the mouth of hell herself, a slave of Satan's power. Remember Mary Magdalene had been a captive to seven demons until the Lord set her free. She has known his power to free the captive. Having seen his power and experienced the freedom he brings, she followed him and served him with her whole life. She followed him all the way to the cross, even when his disciples left him in the hour of his death.

Now she comes to his tomb crushed by her grief. Her liberator, her Lord, was not only crucified and buried. Now she faces another devastating sight—the absence of her Lord's body. She reports the sight to Peter, presuming someone stole his crucified body. Weeping outside the tomb, she sees two angels, asking her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' And then she hears a different voice, but the same question: 'Woman, why are you weeping?' Followed immediately with a second question: 'Whom are you seeking?' She is seeking the body of the one who liberated her from hell, from the possession of seven demons. And then she hears the voice of the Deliverer who had saved her. He speaks *her name*: 'Mary.' The One on whom God bestowed the Name above every name, speaks *her name* in the glory of his resurrection: 'Mary.'

² *The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom*

A shroud of grief had covered her spirit, her heart. His glory was veiled in the horror of Good Friday. What lifted the veil? The risen Lord speaking *her name*: 'Mary.'

The same God who called Abram *by name* from ancient Babylon and said, 'I will make your name great'; the same God who called Israel *by name* and rescued them out of slavery from Egypt; the same Lord who called Israel home from exile saying, 'Fear not, I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine'; this is the same Lord whose Name is Jesus, the Name above all names. And he calls the sorrowing woman of Magdalene by name—'Mary.'

This is the desire of the ages, the greatest need of the soul—to hear the risen Christ call us by name. When do you hear the risen Christ speak your name? It is at the river of baptism, which is both a tomb and a womb of eternal life. The priest speaks in the Name of Christ and baptizes a newborn son or daughter *by name*. We enter the water participating in the death of Christ; we exit the water in the resurrection of Christ, just as Jesus exited the tomb on Easter morning. Later this morning/(in a few moments), the risen Lord calls Solomon and Ireland McGuire by name, to clothe them in the joy and power of his resurrection.

But we do not hear him speak our name only once at baptism. Salvation is not conversion only. Salvation for Mary Magdalene was *not finished* after she was freed from seven demons. Salvation called her onward to the empty tomb to see the risen Christ.

Return with me to this image of beauty on the cover of your bulletin. Look at Mary Magdalene, kneeling before the Lord. Her kneeling figure, worshipping the Lord, is greater than that yawning chasm of death in the background. The man named Jesus—the name God has exalted—exalts the one laid low by the sorrow of death. //

It is not only the sound of his voice, the hearing of her name that transforms Mary. It is *seeing the Lord*. This is her testimony. Not only that she heard him speak her name. But that she has *seen* the Lord. This is the desire of the ages, the greatest longing of our heart—to hear his voice, to see his face. The heartfelt cry of the Psalms is fulfilled at the empty tomb: 'Restore us, O God, let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.'

When do you encounter the risen Christ? When does he call you by name? Not *only* at the river of baptism. We encounter him every time the veil of the tomb is mystically rolled back to reveal the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Our Lord says, 'Come unto Me all who are weary and I will give you rest.' Come to this altar kneeling. Come with the godly sorrow of repentance, with all the weight of guilt and shame that you cannot remove. Come with all that troubles you and vexes you. Come with shattered dreams and all that has broken your heart. Answer the call of the risen Lord who calls you by name, kneel at his holy altar, and you will become stronger than the chasm of darkness that seeking to devour. St. Athanasius said that the power of Christ given to his saints is so great that even children mock death and hell. //

Oh, I long to hear the Lord speak to my deepest heart in private prayer, to give me insight, understanding in mystical encounters. But if he withholds those mystical moments in private prayer, I trust his wisdom. One thing I know, of this I am sure: he promised to be *herewith* resurrection power in his Body and his Blood.

And kneeling here, consuming Christ, you are called then to rise. Those who taste and see that the Lord is good become eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, just like Mary Magdalene. And like Mary became an apostle of the risen Christ, so all who rise from this altar are called and sent by name to be

his apostles. Rise from this altar and say, 'I have seen the Lord. I have tasted and seen the Lord is good. And he is risen. And all for the glory of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.