

Easter Sunday 4/16/17
The Rev. Dee Anne Dodd
St. Paul's, Wallingford CT

I have seen the Lord -- and you have too!

But let me back up and tell you how I know this.
Because I can understand how you might be skeptical.
There was a time when I thought
I'd never see Jesus again.

By the way, do you know which Bible character I am?
Let me give you a couple of clues.
You just heard that story about me.
And kids who were in church school last week
learned about these [hold up red eggs].
Maybe you can ask them to explain...

I'm Mary Magdalene.
One of the last people to see Jesus before he died,
and the first to see him after he rose again.
I'm known as the "apostle to the apostles" --
the one who first told the others the good news of the resurrection.
If it weren't for me,
you might not be here in this beautiful place today.
You might not know the great good news that
you, too, can see Jesus for yourself.

When I went to the tomb that first Easter morning
I thought it was going to be the saddest day ever.
It was still dark, which is exactly how I felt.

To make matters worse, it looked like someone
had tampered with the tomb -- the stone was moved away!
All I wanted was to pay my respects,
say one more good-bye to my dear friend,
and they took even that away from me!
So I hiked up my skirt and ran as fast as I could
to tell a couple of the guys.
They came running to the tomb,
and saw it was empty but for the linens.
Although one of them seemed to get what had happened,
they both went back home.

I alone stayed -- feeling lonelier than I'd ever felt in my life.
So I did what you might do: I wept,
just as Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died.

Then, at my lowest, most disoriented point,

I heard a familiar voice I didn't quite recognize, asking,
"Why are you weeping?"

Why was I weeping?
They'd taken away my Lord and I didn't know where they'd laid him!

Then I turned toward Jesus.
Except, well, I'm embarrassed to admit,
I didn't recognize him -- I thought he was the gardener!

Jesus helped me see the truth, just by saying my name. *Mary.*

I wanted to stay in that moment forever. The overwhelming love.
The compassion for my tears and confusion,
mingled with a jolt of energy and purpose like I'd never known before.
Not only had Jesus risen to new life, so had I.

And when I left that garden,
from that moment on I had Jesus with me, no matter what.

No wonder I announced to the other disciples --
and anyone else who would listen -- that "I have seen the Lord."
And I'm saying it still. Through *you.*

You may not have realized it when
you got gussied up for church this morning,
but you're here to get your marching orders from me,
Mary Magdalene, once and future "apostle to the apostles".
And today's apostles are YOU.

As important as it is to be here today (and every Sunday),
you're the ones sent forth to continue
the Easter celebration when you leave this place
and go about your everyday lives --
back at home and school and work,
back to your neighborhoods and the places you volunteer.
Wherever people or any of God's creation
need a sign of hope, of compassion.
Wherever the outcast need hospitality, or
the powerless need an advocate.
Wherever this world needs shown that love is stronger than hate,
and life more powerful than death.

That's where you take Jesus with you.
That's where you *are* Jesus' hands and heart and feet.
That's how you, in word and deed and generosity, announce
that you, too, have seen the Lord!

#