

## **Come and See v3**

**Early in the service – involving small people:**

**Who would like to come and see what we have here in our Easter Garden..** (maybe have a few little flowers scattered around the church for them to bring out and add to the garden.) What can you see? What is this? Tomb in which Jesus was laid – Big stone rolled in front to keep him safe – but when Mary came early in the morning – the stone had been rolled away! His body was no longer in the tomb!

Mary bumped into a man she thought was the Gardener! But when he said her name – she recognised that he was Jesus – Risen from death to new life!

Risen Lord Jesus, as Mary Magdalene met you in the garden  
on the morning of your resurrection,  
so may we meet you today and every day:  
speak to us as you spoke to her; reveal yourself as the living Lord;  
renew our hope and kindle our joy;  
and send us to share the good news with others. All Amen.

## Sermon:

### **Come and See – our Easter Garden! (Earlier in the service)**

Driving down from St Cergue, towards the plain, as I often do, I never cease to wonder at the view as I turn the first major bend. From this edge, you behold the expansive mountain range – Mt Blanc standing proud in the middle, with the lake stretching out in the valley, from Geneva down to Montreux (?). If I have someone with me in the car, I often say, “just look at that!” “Would you just look at that with me!” (or *instead of me* so I can focus on the road!)

The invitation to **Come and see** runs through John’s Gospel among people who are looking and searching and are invited to **Come and See**. When Jesus notices two men following him, he asks “what are you looking for? He probes the longings of their hearts. He then invites them to “Come and See,” to stay with him and to get to know him. Later, a Samaritan woman meets Jesus, and discovers that he knows her story and affirms her.

In her joy, she rushes into town to invite her community to, in her words: “**Come and See** a man who told me everything I have ever done!”

Former Archbishop and theologian Rowan Williams suggests that everyone has an invisible invitation in their pocket – to (come and) **see** the world through different eyes – maybe today – through Easter Eyes. In your searching and sorrows and celebrations, you are invited to “**Come and see**”.

1. **First “Come and See” through Mary’s tears.** It is still night when she arrives with her spices, showing up and in her numbness and grief, going through the motions to pay her respects by anointing Jesus’ body.

Seeing that the stone has been removed, she assumes that someone has taken away his body. Her grief and shock from the events of Jesus’ death, are now compounded by confusion and fear at this second loss.

I think at times we have all felt stuck in Good Friday grief and sorrow – and that is where some of us may be today. At a personal level we carry burdens of loss of a loved one, of a job, of direction in life, of our health, of a close relationship that has broken down, or loss of friends – having moved away from our family and social networks.

In addition, we may well have tears of anger and sadness as we witness the Holy Week brutality unfolding afresh across our world, through state-sanctioned violence.

Revd Dr Ruth Patterson has worked for peace and reconciliation in N. Ireland. Her words ring true, when she observes “I know of no way for hearts to be softened other than by a combination of love and suffering. Somewhere along the way, because of life experience, we get cracked or broken – and lose our way... but in the mystery of God’s grace and mercy, it is that very cracking that becomes our salvation, our way to “**see again** and find our way home”.

Come and see through tears, with your longing and your need.

2. **Secondly, come and see the one who calls Mary by her name,** whose voice she suddenly recognises. There are echoes in this encounter of the Good Shepherd, who calls his sheep by name, and they follow him because they recognise his voice! (John 10.3-4)

*Mary turns towards Jesus* with a cry of warm intimacy: Rabbouni! As if to say – Oh it’s you, my Teacher, friend and Lord. The one who has known me fully and has loved me into wholeness.

When Jesus called Mary by her name, she recognised his voice and turned towards him. Today - “Come and See the Risen Christ” who calls us by name. *Maybe all we need to do is turn towards Christ* – to look in his direction as a starting point and to orient our lives towards him.

3. **Thirdly, come and see the one who says: “Do not hold on to me.”**  
We don’t really have the language to comprehend and pin down resurrection..

Theologian David Ford – attempts it by saying that “**Jesus happens in a new way**”.

I wonder if playful poetry comes closer to what we can grasp of this mystery: Trevor Dennis, (former dean of Chester Cathedral) imagines Mary’s back in that early morning garden:

*What is he doing out of the bed of his tomb  
On a cold morning,  
Without the wrappings of his burial?*

*It makes no sense –  
Unless, of course  
He happens to be God.*

*Is that the reason why she does not mark his form,  
Although she sees him, stands so close,  
Addresses him, accuses him almost –  
because he happens to be God?  
And is that why she cannot hold him,  
Because he happens to be God,  
and God eludes us always,  
escaping us in order to be God?  
And is that why he calls her name,  
And only needs that one small word,  
to pierce her grief  
and turn it all to joy?*

*For with this “Mary!” all spins round to joy,  
The deep, transforming joy of finding God  
And knowing him for who he is,  
Her friend and her companion  
Her teacher, healer and her love.  
(God treads softly here, Trevor Dennis)*

**Do not hold on to me... says Jesus... because we would so like to keep him with us – where we are – contained, on our side, ready to do our bidding...**

But he is ascending to his Father and our Father.. his God and our God.. and Christ's Risen presence fills all creation and lives in us. As Colossians puts it “You have been raised with Christ... you are hidden with Christ in God.” – How different will that make us in the turmoil and uncertainties of our world? How do we look on all that is happening with different eyes because of the Resurrection?

And we come back to his invitation to his early disciples – to Come and See and get to know me. Now it is the Risen Christ who beckons us – Come and See where my life and love is breaking through with new hope, forgiveness and healing, always the chance to start again and time to turn our gaze towards him..

*(Come and see what my Risen life looks like, when you have the courage to forgive (even yourself), to build bridges towards the stranger, to visit someone who is lonely, to take part in advocacy for justice, to spend time in costly, loving service and in creativity and beauty and cherishing and caring for the natural world... Come and see how my Risen life can open up a situation of despair and dead-end – to make you peace-makers in my name, instead of being hungry for war and domination. Come and see how my Risen life can fill you with courage to love even your enemies – and above all... to be set free from fear.)*

A member of our community, (whom we will call Sheila) gave me permission to share a mini- breakthrough – resurrection moment she had recently with a relative who was dying..

During Covid, this person had loved joining us in worship through our online services – which had revived her faith. Since then, however, she had sort of lost her way and withdrawn – and was now very near to death. On her last visit before she died, Sheila had offered to read Psalm 23. Unable to speak, her relative had nodded and smiled as Sheila read this ancient prayer to her. Sheila said afterwards that it felt as though her relative had turned towards the Shepherd – her heart softened towards God..

We've had six weeks to prepare for the Mystery of Easter – through Lent.. and now we have six weeks to explore Easter.. during Eastertide... and of course a lifetime to respond to the invitation to Come and See where Christ is calling each one of us – out of our safe places into risky loving service in his name.

**Come and see through your tears**

**Come and see the one who calls you by your name**

**Come and see where Christ is leading you always ahead as well as with you.. on the path of resurrection hope.**

