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John 20 & Acts 10:34-45  
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### Christ of the Nations

Jesus Christ is Risen! **Christ is Risen indeed.**

Welcome, brothers and sisters, to this holiest morning of the year. Thank you, Julie, for this stone and cloth behind me, symbolizing the stone rolled away and the empty tomb, leaving only a burial cloth behind. Today, we celebrate a mystery. An occupying colonial empire killed a poor Palestinian Jew, but he did not stay dead. Whether you interpret this scripture as a bodily resurrection, spectral vision, or metaphor of commission, these two texts teach us how the risen Christ transcends all labels. I cannot adequately talk about how Jesus's resurrection was a transformational experience, but here is what I will do to distinguish between Jesus Christ before and after resurrection: before, I will call him Jesus, and after, I will call them Christ.

Please pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you. Our risen Christ is beyond all understanding. Amen.

Do not cling to me; I belong to the world now.

The Risen Christ in the gospel of John is a transcendent character. They tell Mary not to cling to them. They walk into a locked room and is not recognized by the disciples when they show up on the beach. The Risen Christ is mysterious and transitory. The disciples want Jesus to stay with them to keep leading and teaching them. The disciples are clinging to Christ, just like Mary wants to cling to Christ in the joy of seeing Christ. But Christ is ascending; they are moving on. On from that physical male body as a poor Palestinian Jew and off to be something more.

The concept I am alluding to is called the scandal of particularity. How could the logos of all creation and the world's savior be a singular man at a singular time? Indeed, most of Jesus's ministry during his life was as an itinerant rabbi preaching in the countryside of Galilee and, to a lesser extent, the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus responded to the contemporary problems of his time, healing the sick, responding to Jewish law, parables about farming, family systems, and loving Samaritans. Does he belong to the past? Does he belong to the disciples as their teacher and leader? Does he belong to the 1st century and the Jewish Christians who followed him?

Do not cling to me; I belong to the world now.

Mary had every right to cling to Jesus in that moment after the resurrection. And indeed, we will see this clinging continue these next few weeks as we read more stories of the disciples

encountering the risen Christ. But as I read Peter's sermon before baptizing Cornelius and his whole family. I see Jesus of the nations, who poured out the Holy Spirit on Gentiles, which means non-Jewish people like most of us here, but the word Gentiles can also be translated as the nations or the rest of the world. I see how Christ was not restricted to their Jewish and first-century particularity and became a figure the whole world would revere—a Jewish Messiah through whom the entire world would be blessed. Indeed, Jesus is another example of the fulfillment of God's words to Abraham: through your offspring, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Do not cling to me; I belong to the world now.

Brothers and sisters, we came together this Easter morning because of that paradox of a particular Jesus who lived two thousand years ago and a cosmic Christ with something to tell us today. We come together to celebrate that though the Romans executed Jesus, his love and peace could not be killed. We come together to celebrate two thousand years of a church that has struggled faithfully with God from within the Anabaptist family of denominations (including Mennonites, Brethren, and Amish) who read the words of Christ and came to a different conclusion from the catholic and protestant faiths. But Christ is beyond our differences and is alive in all churches and people who seek to follow them.

But the universality of the risen Christ does not mean that we, the First Mennonite Church of Reedley, own Jesus. Nor do I think that Christ can be contained by Mennonites, Catholics or Protestants. Christ is bigger than our biggest ideas. Christ is pouring out their holy spirit on the whole world. Who am I to say what Christ cannot do or speak through?

Do not cling to me; I belong to the world now.