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John 20:1-18
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Recognizing Christ

Christ has Risen! Christ has risen indeed! The angels have rolled away the stone and the tomb is empty. The powers and principalities tried to halt Christ's mission of liberation, but they have failed. Today we celebrate our Lord conquering death and proclaiming for all that there will be good news for the poor, they will be able to work and have enough wages to eat, they will plant vineyards and enjoy their fruit, build houses and live in them. Jesus proclaims release of prisoners, prisoners of war, prisoners of conscience because they worship God and not the emperor, and even the thief Barabas is set free. Jesus proclaims sight to the blind, he has opened the eyes of religious leaders like Nichodemous so that they can see the kingdom of God is about loving the whole world. Jesus proclaims freedom to the oppressed! Freedom for a people under the boot of empire. Freedom for people looked down upon because of their race, gender, social standing, sexual orientation, or any other reason. The Lord God shall wipe away every tear and take away disgrace from all people.

Jesus's mission in life is vindicated! Jesus's mission lives on in all of us.

Please pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer.

The image of Jesus the gardener may just be my favorite part of the Gospel of John. Here we have a simple man, perhaps a rake in his hand and a little smudge of dirt on his face. If we are to take the gospel at its word, he looks so unassuming that at first Mary does not recognize him.

Jesus comes to us in simple ways.

In the Zulu language, there is this word, Ubuntu, which roughly translates to "I am, because we are, and since we are therefore I am." This concept means that our humanity is fully realized when we recognize the humanity of the other person. In the garden by the tomb, Mary is desperate to know where Jesus is, she asks the gardener, please tell me where you have taken him. She does not recognize the gardener, because her mind is full of last week's events. It is only when Jesus says her name. Only when Jesus recognizes the humanity of Mary is she able to recognize Jesus. Mary is because Jesus and Mary are, only together does Mary see the full image of God.

And so when do we see Jesus in others. Well, it seems to me that the moments that I've seen Jesus in others is when they have recognized that I am human. It is those moments of unique

humanization that I can see Jesus calling out my name, saying to me that I am indeed a beloved child of God, made in the image of God. That I excelled at my craft or that my flaws do not make me broken. When someone sees me as human, my eyes are opened to the possibility that they too are radically human, that they are made in the image of Jesus, in the image of God.

So in the midst of our celebrations this Sunday, as we celebrate the risen Lord, do not fail to recognize the image of God within each and every one of these people gathered this morning.

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