

April 20, 2014 Easter

*Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24*

*Colossians 3:1-4*

*John 20:1-18*

**Sermon**            *Called By Name*

First thing this morning, we've got to clear the board, get a couple of things out of the way- honesty test- raise your hand if you have a great deal of trouble remembering other people's names? I was thinking that might be the case. The second question might be a little more difficulty-how many of you have trouble remembering your own name? Ok I am just checking. I guess I am with most of you because sometimes I have a great deal of trouble remembering names. I can place the faces if they are in context and that helps but names as you know are always another story. I think I have gotten better over time but it is tough whenever you are often thrust into situations where you meet a lot of people from time to time at least, I have an excuse. Now there are a lot of you folks who have been part of this church and this community for an awfully lot of years. And you still have a hard time remember names of people that you think you have known for years and years. It can be sort of embarrassing and frustrating but I think until you do remember those names, I don't believe we are ever going to know that person for sure or build any kind of relationship with that person because as far as we are concerned that person is in essence still a stranger because no matter how many times in a course of a week we might encounter that person in our lives. If you think about it, the loss of this simple courtesy has become the most in humanizing factors in our modern society. Now today, most of us are "what" rather than people. Number-your credit card number, your account number, your social security number, your driver license number, your policy number, your check number, and don't even get me started on hospitals. You might end up being an appendectomy in room 303 or you might be a hernia in room 234. They don't put you in the hospital for a tonsillectomy any more but you used to be the tonsillectomy in 532. At one time believe it or not I was a

blood clot. I was a blood clot in room 456. Nothing is more impersonal. And what is nice in living in a small town sometimes is you can go into the Post Office, or Safeway or your local attorney, or the vet or even the dentist and be called by name.

Now in Jesus time, unlike our own time, a name was a really, really important thing because it was always selected for its meaning or its significance. Many times in fact it was given to perhaps predict or describe the future personality or life experiences that child might have during the course of life. For example in the book of Genesis, Jacob meant the planter, the one who followed after which Jacob did; while Esau meant hairy which he was. Anyone want to be that kind of hairy? I don't, never the less boys would take the father's name as well. What was Peter's name Simon Bar Jonah, Simon the son of Jonah? Judas was even described as Simon Iscariot's son. If the son shamed his father it brought shame upon the whole house in which the son was raised. Called by name was then and is a very important thing because a name is in many ways that we are. What we are about as people, describes us in personality which we act out in life. As we have noted before being called by name, can establish a relationship with another person and many times such relationships can be life giving. Relationships can mean the difference between continuing to live what we might consider damaging or unfulfilling or unfruitful life and changing our life around into something new to something better

This I think was the case for Mary Magdalene in that first Easter morning. Surely at some point she had been called by Jesus otherwise she would not have been so faithful to him through his suffering, his death and his burial when even the twelve the closest disciples to Jesus were many times nowhere to be found at that point. The Gospels tell us very little about Mary other than the fact that is quoted in Luke chapter 8 that Jesus was said to have cast out seven demons from Mary. You know that this event was not accounted for us in scripture but we can assume that something brought such an emotional and spiritual change in Mary's life that after that time she was never too far from the footsteps of Jesus. Whatever Mary's past relationships had been to him it seemed

that it was over for her after Jesus' death on the cross. As we see her on that Easter morning which Susan described for us in today's reading, Mary was probably at the lowest point ever that she had been at, in her life. She had some sort of wonderful experience with Jesus. She had invested her entire life in his ministry. After his death her life seemed to crash. She was so devastated. She did not know where to go or who to turn to. She didn't think she would ever see Jesus again. Guess what he was there in the garden that day all along. She was so overwhelmed with her grief, her sorrows, her tears, and she pined that her vision was blurred so to speak so she was kept from seeing the one that she had loved and had followed for so many years of her life; the one who could turn her life from tears into joy. But notice what happened when Jesus called her by her name. "Mary", he said and in an instance she responds with the pet name rabbioni, teacher, and at that very moment her relationship was reestablished but not the old relationship. The old one was lost and the new one that was fresh and alive had been born that day. Of course Mary's first response was to grab Jesus in a great big bear hug and hold him there but Jesus would not allow that to happen. There has been a lot of speculation on the part of scholars about why Jesus reacted by pushing Mary away. But I am convinced that Jesus was trying to keep Mary from clinging, clinging to the past and wanting instead for her to look toward the future. To look toward that new life that was being offered. He seemed to be saying that after the resurrection everything was new, everything was different and even old friends cannot go back to the way things were before. When Jesus called Mary's name, he called her to something new; to something exciting, to a life with restored meaning, restored purpose, a fresh new beginning so instead of clinging to a worn out body of the crucified Jesus; Jesus called Mary and the other disciples into a new mission, a mission to which they would be witnesses to the Good News of the resurrected Jesus. Jesus had healed broken lives, relationships, and the one who forgives sins in God's name and the one who calls us to a new abundant life right now and to the one to come.

You know this morning the same resurrected Jesus who met Mary that first Easter morning wants to meet each one of us where ever we are on life's journey today; whether we are at the lowest or highest point we have ever been in life; Jesus is calling our names as well. He is not caught up with where we have been. He is not caught up with what we have done in life. In fact his message for us this morning is to let go of the hurt; let go of the fears; let go of the doubts or the mistakes of the past and to keep our eyes on what lies ahead so that we can reach out and take hold with a fresh new start that Jesus offers us today. And above all he invites us to not only heed that call but to take that second step to respond by calling his name and in return to move into that closer relationship with him and into his service in sharing the Good News of God's love as we live our lives in every day of the week as well how we treat talk each other every day of our lives. We are invited today to listen to the words of the hymn and to listen to the message of this sermon, listen to the scripture, but most of all we are to listen to what your heart speaks to you this morning because Jesus is calling you and you by name. Jesus is calling you to a life in relationship with him. Jesus is calling all of us to acknowledge him as Mary Magdalene did in John Gospel as Mary said these important words, "I am seen the Lord" "I have seen the Lord. "

And together we say. AMEN