

Easter Sunrise, 2009

April 12, 2009

John 20: 1-18

Title: I Have Seen The Lord

You know there are many advertisements along our interstate highways. Well, for several years high above the trees at the Hillsborough exit there stood this gasoline station sign. It was one word SHELL. At night when you passed by that way, it was the first thing you saw.

However, for several years that sign when illuminated at night had one letter in the word SHELL left in darkness. The letter S was not illuminated. There it was above the darked sky HELL.

Now, I must admit as a Carolina fan, I really liked that sign. Yes, indeed, this road is heading toward Durham, therefore the designation HELL made sense to me. Eventually, the sign was taken down.

Easter, Easter Sunrise is a lot like that. We come to the place of death, a memorial garden. We come before it's fully light. Look around. What you see is resting places of the dead. That's the setting of Easter—

People come expecting death. Tombs aren't supposed to be empty. Mary, in darkness, saw the stone rolled away, and ran for help in finding the body of Jesus. Two run back and find the CSI evidence—grave clothes. They go home.

Mary stands weeping. It's the sign you see denoting the end. The end of love, the end of hope, the end of life. 13 fresh graves in Carthage; 5000 graves in Arlington cemetery; thousands of graves in Iraq. A springtime coming with reckless teenage drivers on the roads. You go home; you weep.

It may not be HELL, but it's a power that lurks.

But there is another sign that shines in the darkness. It says God's Decisive Newness. This sign can be hard to see, but it is there, over the horizon. Notice that before the sun comes up, it gives off light in the

dawn. God's Decisive Newness in Jesus' resurrection shines before we can figure it out.

These disciples live in darkness. Mary mistakes Jesus for a gardener. How often have we mistaken Jesus?

Mary is named! We too are named by Jesus, given the power of his new life. Through our baptism into Jesus we are named his beloved children, joined to his death and resurrection. We may not figure that out; we may live in darkness; we may just go home—yet we are given God's decisive newness.

As are these sisters and brothers named by Jesus. LET'S HEAR THEIR NAMES.

(READ THE NAMES OF the 16 in our columbarium)

If Jesus has been raised from death, what really is settled—

- is there nothing beyond the hell of a broken relationship
- is there nothing beyond that pink slip
- is retirement diminished by a shrinking economy
- must I be known as only a consumer
- is my place in the world limited by my ethnic origins
- is there only a shallow grave for the dead?

When Jesus tells Mary not to hold on to him, he's trying to say don't PIN ME DOWN IN THE PAST. Life has changed. Take down the old signs.

Jesus is alive and loose in the world. Mary could not hold Jesus down in a certain place, a specific time. He is the Lord of all places, all times.

None of us can hold Jesus the way Mary wanted. We can know him alive in our lives. We can feast on his Easter promise. We can trust, trust that he is coming toward us.

He is always coming toward us. Can't you see the sign...It glows God's Decisive Newness. Nothing can stop its glow. Just ask Mary

Who runs and tells I have seen the Lord.

You and I are so to run, even if we don't have it figured out.

Say it in the nursing home, say it in the board room, say it in the bar room, say it in the bed room, say it at the tomb.

Jesus Christ is risen today .