

*Kkkkatie, beautiful Katie,  
You're the only gggirl that I adore.  
When the mmmoon shines, over the cccowshed,  
I'll be waiting for you by the kkkitchen door.*

Not a typical beginning to an Easter sermon, I know. But then again, this isn't your typical Sunday.

David Lose tells how this song never failed to bring a smile to his daughter when she was a toddler. He writes, *"It always came in pretty handy when she was upset. Whether recovering from a bruised knee or a lost contest with her older brother for some toy, my daughter Katie invariably responded to my singing, first with a shy smile, wiping away the tears dotting her cheeks, and then breaking into a full blown grin of recognition and delight."*

I wonder if there wasn't something deeper going on inside Katie? I wonder.

Hearing her father or mother call her by name, Katie was reconnected to those who love her. She remembered who she was by remembering whose she was – a beloved daughter. Even when in the middle of a meltdown (that often plagues a two-year old), when called lovingly by her name, Katie was freed from the hold of her confusion and found her way back to the world. And what she came back to was, really, a whole new world. At least for the moment, her old fears and hurts had been banished, replaced by a sense of belonging and security that showed itself in that grin of delight.

I have a hunch that it was something like that for Mary.

Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb early that first Easter morning. She discovers it is empty and runs back to town to tell Simon Peter and another disciple, the one Jesus loved. They, in turn, race to the tomb, followed by Mary, who after this second trip remains in the garden after the other two go back to their homes.

One can only imagine that Mary is distraught and exhausted, filled with grief and confusion. She looks into the tomb and sees two angels in white, yet she shows neither fear nor wonder that normally characterizes such encounters. Instead, she is distressed, like a lost child. Turning, she is confronted by none other than Jesus, the one whose body she is seeking. Yet she is still too stuck in the trauma of recent events to recognize her Lord.

And then it happens: "Mary," Jesus, calling her by name, penetrates the shroud of her grief and draws her into a whole new world.

It's hard to imagine all the emotions that must have coursed through Mary in that moment; and yet, I have a feeling that in a split second, she responded at first with a shy smile, wiping away the tears on her cheeks, and then broke into a grin of recognition and delight, breathing "my teacher."

And it doesn't end here. After a brief moment, Mary is addressed by her Lord again: *"Go to the others, and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Having been called by name, Mary is now sent to proclaim the wonder of what she has experienced.*

And she does, racing back to town once more to announce to the other disciples and the world, *"I have seen the Lord."* And in so doing, Mary becomes the first apostle, herald of the resurrection.

So, where are you stuck just now? What has you paralyzed or traumatized, confused or bewildered? Maybe it's war, raging now in so many parts of the world, or the climate crisis which weighs so heavily on our minds. Or finding affordable housing, still affecting too many in our state. Maybe it's grief over the death of a loved one or the disintegration of an important relationship? Maybe it's an uncertain future or a painful past. Maybe, it's any one of a host of things that plagues us on any given day of the year, diminishing our lives and paralyzing us where we stand.

Whatever it is, hear again the good news that Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is calling you by name, and reaching out to draw you to himself and reconnect you to those who love you. This is the significance of Baptism, where we are named by God to be one of God's children now and forever. And, it's in this glorious worship that God calls us by name once again, penetrating the numbness and brokenness of our lives, to rejoin us to God's unending love, ushering us into a whole new world.

I know, in one way, it's the same old world, ravaged by conflict and shadowed by fear. And yet because Christ has been raised it is also entirely new, infused with divine possibility and sparkling with the promise of a Creator determined to redeem it in love.

And it doesn't end here. Now that you have been called by name, so you are now sent to proclaim what you have seen and heard to his other disciples and all the world. And, this world is ready for such news!

Called by name, sent to proclaim. Maybe you feel lost and alone, showing up to worship out of a sense of obligation or duty but feeling a wee bit empty inside, numb from the thousand things you're worried about and feeling alone and isolated. God is calling you by name, too, reconnecting you to Jesus and each other and inviting you into a whole new world, one infused by the possibility of resurrection and the promise that nothing – not even death itself – can separate us from the love of God.

Can you hear it? Imagine it sung with love by our heavenly Father over and over until we all know the words by heart? Can you hear it? Kkkatie, beautiful Katie, it begins. Or maybe Aaandrew, beautiful Andrew. Or Sssarah, Cccarlos, Jjjan, even, Ccclarissa, beautiful Clarissa, you're my beloved child that I adore...

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