

**NT: Acts 10:34-43**

**NT: I Corinthians 15:1-11**

**Gp: John 20:1-18**

When I was about 7, Lennon and McCartney wrote a song which has haunted me all my life. Sometimes I've been proud that there is a Beatles song with my name as the title and sometimes I have despaired! One nursing home I used to visit, I knew whenever the maintenance man was in because as I passed his workroom, I'd hear him singing out, *Michelle, ma belle!* If I had a pound for every time someone has sung that to me, I may not be standing before you now but lying on my yacht in the Mediterranean sunshine!

Names are important. Somehow they capture who we are. Just think of brands. For the older ones among us, you can't imagine Laura Ashley's shop being Ethel Austin's or vice versa. Likewise, you would never see Fr Crispin as a Wayne or Gary, (no offence to Waynes and Garys). Our names are a fundamental part of who we are.

In the Talmudic Jewish tradition, God was never called by name. Perhaps because no name can capture God, perhaps because they believed they must never be so familiar, it was a mark of deep respect.

In John's account of the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene has come to the tomb to fulfil the Jewish rituals of burial for Jesus but she finds the body gone. She runs to tell the disciples who have to come and see for themselves. But still they do not realise what has happened and they go, leaving Mary alone, weeping in the garden.

Even when she encounters angels by the tomb, she does not understand.

*Then she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!'*

At this point, as he speaks her name, she knows him, she recognises her risen Lord.

In that simple naming, all is made clear. In that moment, it is not just that God in the person of the risen Christ, knows her fully but in her response, Rabbouni, she knows him. Here the fullness of God's love for humanity is captured and understood in this simple exchange of names. Here in this connection between the two, the work of the ministry of Jesus passes from him to Mary to be the first of many to go out and preach the good news of the salvation of humanity.

As Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians: *For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.*

When we were baptised, we were given our name but also so much more

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

This is the journey we all began at our baptism. We were called by name as Christ claimed us for his own, he knows our very being in completeness. But for us, unlike Mary in the garden, our understanding of him will take a lifetime. This is a journey that Margot is beginning today. She will receive her beautiful name and she will, like us, need to spend the rest of her life listening out for all the times that God will call that name. Until the final time he calls and then each one of us in turn will stand before him, and beholding his glory, will call his name and know him as Mary did in the garden, as Paul when he said:

*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

Margot, you begin this journey surrounded by love, by your parents and Godparents, by all your family and the congregation here at St Nick's and may you live your life through the power of the risen Christ enfolded in his eternal love. May all of us hear again our name uttered by the risen Lord this Easter and may all of us continue to journey on in faith and hope and love.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

**Revd Michelle Montrose**