Mary stands weeping outside the tomb. She has been crying for days; she can't stop crying, for her dear friend is dead. She feels alone and empty. Now someone has taken his body. Tears stream down her already wet face. She is doubled over with grief. What next? How can this get any worse? There is the gardener; maybe he knows where the body is. She must retrieve it, wrap it again in linen with spices, give it the respect in death that Jesus did not have while he was alive. Mary is frantic; “Tell me what you have done with him!” she cries to the gardener. Then the gardener calls her by name, “Mary!” and at once she knows. Tears continue to flow, joy mixed with the grief of the past days. She hurries to tell the disciples, “I have seen the Lord! He is alive!”

“I have seen the Lord!” Mary's words fill all space and time to find their way to our waiting ears. “He is alive!” It is just as real today as in that early morning many, many years ago. The breeze outside these walls whispers the message, “I have seen the Lord.” The birds sing it. Streams and brooks and rivers splash and gurgle it. The woodpecker's tap, tap, tap; the snake's slither; the bark of a dog; the moos of a field of cows – all combine in a symphony of adoration: “We have seen the Lord!” Waves crashing onto the shore shout, “He is alive!” Around this planet, the sun's rays warm the earth, clouds bump in the sky, sand blows across a desert, rain steadily plops on the ground, snow and ice blanket great mountains; they all join the joyful song, “He is alive!”

Today, they sang of Christ's triumph over death first in Samoa and Christmas Island. Australia, Japan, North and South Korea followed, Then China, India, Pakistan, Russia, Greece, Germany, Syria and Brazil; wherever there are Christians, they have celebrated the great, good news earlier, while we were sleeping. Now it is our turn. Our turn to dust off the “Alleluias,” and pile them one upon another. Our turn to share the peace that passes all understanding, to gather and sing and laugh and break bread together. Our turn to hear the proclamation, “I have seen the Lord! He is alive!” and wonder what it means for us at this very time and in this very place.

What is dead in the Christian church, in our part of it? How might we see the Lord in a whole new way? God is pouring life into us, so that we might know the reality of resurrection. How might we reach out to others with Mary's news, “We have seen the Lord?” How will we spread Christ's rule of peace into the midst of war, into the hatred people inflict on one another, into the tragedy of diseases that ravage people around the world, into the poor and hungry and forgotten of this world, in the people we love who suffer every day?

“I have seen the Lord!” That message is for you. Is there something in you that is dying, that has already died, that cries for resurrection? “I have seen the Lord!” Allow the truth, the promise of Mary's words to reach that deepest part of you, the part that no one else can see: the broken, fearful, grieving, angry part of you. Believe that Jesus cares about you, about all of you, even the ugly part. For he who was dead is now alive, he has the power to make of us, all of us, each one of us, a new creation.

Every time that you find yourself wandering, wondering, not sure where the answers for your questions can be found, listen and you will hear him speaking your name. Your name. For he loves you, he gave his life for you and he lives to shower his love upon you. He forgives you – for everything, and calls you to live with his love in your heart, guiding you to be his modern-day disciple.

Jesus has slipped from the bonds of death. He has risen. He lives to redeem this broken world. Listen to the birds of the air, the rustling leaves and babbling. Share the joy of people of every nation this day, as we join in Mary's joyous discovery: “We have seen the Lord!”

Amen.

*Easter C*

*March 27, 2016*

*Floyd-Willis Lutheran Parish*

*John 20:1-18*