Christ in You — the Hope of Glory

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Texts:
 John 20:11-17
 Colossians 1:25-27

The scripture read from John 20 is one of several times when the resurrected Christ was not immediately known to people who knew him and loved him well. Another time: in John 21 along the seashore when he was cooking fish and asked Peter three times if he loved him; and in Luke 24, when he walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus and wasn’t recognized for quite a while, even after a long discussion during that 7-mile trip.

When I was growing up, I viewed all of the Bible as equally inspired. When I stopped believing that God gave a dictation for each word in scripture, then I started to think of Mark as the most reliable Gospel, since it was written the earliest (about 70 AD) and Matthew and Luke were written afterwards, mainly based on Mark .

John, written about 25-40 years later, by the disciple John, was certainly in a different category of gospels — the other three being called the “Synoptic Gospels” (which means they gave a general summary of the life of Christ). John covers a different time span than the others, and it portrays Jesus teaching at length on theological matters, unlike the other gospels. The events leading up to the crucifixion are also different in John’s gospel, and Passover occurs *after* the crucifixion.

The gospel of John starts out with Jesus called “The Word” and throughout the book he has several “I am” statements that are not in the other gospels — Jesus as

* the bread of life
* the light of the world
* the door
* the good shepherd
* the resurrection and the life
* the way and the truth and the life
* the true vine.

I’ve decided that perhaps the value and beauty of John’s gospel is in its difference. John, one of the people closest to Jesus, wanted to write about things that were important about Jesus, but he thought other writers had left out. There is some evidence that John knew what was in at least one of the other gospels. So his gospel covers what John felt was the essence of Christ’s teachings. Where else do we have such beautiful passages as:

* From John 13: “This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you.”
* From John 14: “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father/Parent.”
* An admonition for all believers: From John 17: “I pray they will be one, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I’ve given them **the glory** that you gave me so that they can be one just as we are one. I’m in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me.”

This last passage ties in with what was read from Colossians 1:25-27: I have become (the church’s) servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness — the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

I know sometimes I get discouraged by the evil in the world. I don’t WANT to be the hope of glory — because I don’t see that as being very hopeful! I want someone like Gordon Cosby or Fred Taylor — or someone more powerful, outspoken, stronger, attractive, younger, and in-the-know. THAT would be a person that could be the hope of glory!

I daresay, most of us don’t feel (well, most likely NONE of us feel) we are doing greater things than Jesus. We probably don’t usually feel at one with Christ. We think these thoughts are presumptuous. Jesus did all sorts of wonderful and miraculous things. We are like the disciples, hoping for *Jesus* to do the equivalent of restoring the kingdom to Israel and getting rid of the Romans. We don’t claim this power that Jesus spoke of — although the Book of Acts tells us the early church did just that when they realized Jesus had left them physically — and it was now their job to live out his life. Can we really claim that Christ is in us even as he was in God — and that *we are* the “hope of glory?”

How can we live in the realm of Resurrection?

I’d like to reread a portion of the John 20 section:

**11**Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12**and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

**13**They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” **14**At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

**15**He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

**16**Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

**17**Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father/Parent. Go instead to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

When Mary Magdalene was crying at the tomb, she didn’t recognize Jesus at first even after she saw him. Well, fair enough — she thought he was dead. I have a friend, Randy, an episcopal priest, who has said that when he runs into parishioners at the grocery store when he is wearing shorts and flip-flops rather than clerical robes, they often don’t recognize him. Even when Jesus spoke to her and said, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” she didn’t recognize his voice.

But when he said her name — Mary — she knew.

There is something special when we hear our own names spoken by a beloved person — a parent, a child, a best friend, a lover. My mom died in 1996 . Whenever she called me — and these were days when the caller’s name didn’t show up on the phone — she always said, “It’s your mom.” I often expressed annoyance at her for that. Of *course* I knew it was her voice! She died during Lent, and that year the Resurrection had new meaning for me. Others of you who have lost parents might have had this same experience: Before she died, I didn’t understand how much of what she had told and taught me I had internalized. Once she died, I realized how much of her voice was now mine — and that she was always with me. I think after Christ’s death and Resurrection, the disciples knew they had internalized the voice of Jesus. Jesus told them if he didn’t leave them, his spirit (the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Advocate) wouldn’t come to them. Once his physical body wasn’t present in their lives, they realized he was *always* with them.

When do *we* recognize Christ? We don’t have the luxury of knowing what his physical body and face looked like. But I think that knowledge might make it harder for us to see him in others. Can we see him here in this room? In people who we love/like/and are often annoyed with? On Columbia Road? On the Metro? As one of us? The Risen Christ in you *is* the hope of glory. We are here to represent him and live his life in ours**.** *That* is what he wants from us now.

We didn’t have the passing of the peace earlier. In closing, I would like us to greet each other now, carefully saying the *name* of the person you are addressing, and telling them: “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*.”

And maybe one day we will be able to look in the mirror and say to ourselves, “Christ in *me —* the hope of glory” as well.

May we each hear Christ speaking our own names and giving us the grace and power to live out His life in us.

Amen.