

SERMON
May 2, 2021
Say Their Name
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SCRIPTURE: John 20:1-18

20:1—21:25 Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance, 2 so she ran off to Simon Peter and the other disciple—the one Jesus loved—and told them, “The Rabbi has been taken from the tomb! We don’t know where they have put Jesus!” 3 At that, Peter and the other disciple started out toward the tomb. 4 They were running side by side, but then the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He didn’t enter but bent down to peer in and saw the linen wrappings lying on the ground. 6 Then Simon Peter arrived and entered the tomb. He observed the linen wrappings on the ground, 7 and saw the piece of cloth that had covered Jesus’ head lying not with the wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the disciple who had arrived first at the tomb went in. He saw and believed. 9 As yet, they didn’t understand the scripture that Jesus was to rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

11 Meanwhile, Mary stood weeping beside the tomb. Even as she wept, she stooped to peer inside, 12 and there she saw two angels in dazzling robes. One was seated at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus’ body had lain. 13 They asked her, “Why are you weeping?” She answered them, “Because they have taken away my Rabbi, and I don’t know where they have put the body.” 14 No sooner had she said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, “Why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” She supposed it was the gardener, so she said, “Please, if you’re the one who carried Jesus away, tell me where you’ve laid the body and I will take it away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned to him and said, “Rabboni!”—which means “Teacher”. 17 Jesus then said, “Don’t hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to Abba God. Rather, go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, ‘I’m ascending to my Abba and to your Abba, my God and your God!’” 18 Mary of Magdala went to the disciples. “I have seen the Teacher!” she announced. Then she reported what the savior had said to her.

SERMON

SAY THEIR NAME

Today I would like to focus on the phrase, "Jesus said, "Mary." She turned to him" from today's scripture:

The angelic beings asked Mary, “Why are you weeping?” She answered them, “Because they have taken away my Rabbi, and I don’t know where they have put the body.” No sooner had she said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there but she didn’t know it was Jesus.

*He asked her, “Why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” She supposed it was the gardener, so she said, “Please, if you’re the one who carried Jesus away, tell me where you’ve laid the body and I will take it away.” **Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned to him and said, “Rabboni!”—which means “Teacher”.***

The sound of hearing her name turned Mary toward Jesus . . . and she recognized him.

I wonder what would have happened if Jesus did not call her by her name. I wonder about the power of being addressed by one's name.

Dale Carnegie, author of *"How to Win Friends and Influence People,"* and developer of training programs based on core human relations principles that help people transform their impact and their lives, is noted for saying:

"A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language."

Why is it so important to use people's names?

A person's name is the greatest connection to their own identity and individuality. Some might say it is the most important word in the world to that person. It is the one way we can easily get someone's attention. It is a sign of courtesy and a way of recognizing them. When someone remembers our name after meeting us, we feel respected and more important. It makes a positive and lasting impression on us. To not remember a name, especially when someone has had to repeat it several times, is to make that person feel slighted.

So, there is power in addressing someone by their name:

- We connect to them.
- We have their attention.
- They feel seen.
- It makes them feel respected.
- Using someone's name gives them a sense that they are a person and not a function.

There is even a richer history to remembering someone's name.

In Jewish teachings, there is a notion that every person dies three deaths:

- the first death is the death of the body,
- the second is when the soul leaves the body, and
- the third death occurs after the very last time that anyone still living says the person's name aloud.

This is why it is so important that when Jesus celebrated his last supper with his disciples, he said, ***"Whenever you do this, remember me."*** When you break and share the bread and lift and drink from the cup REMEMBER ME!

In Jewish tradition, a person does not suffer the third and final death, if they are remembered. It is why Jewish descendants are named using the initial of the departed. It keeps their memory, and their "life" alive.

And this honoring of ancestry by naming children after grandparents is not unique to Jewish people. Have you ever gone to an Italian family picnic and yelled, "Joe!" Do you have any idea how many Joes respond? If you yell, "Anthony!" you have covered 90% of the males present.

Say My Name

Say His Name

Say Her Name

Say Their Name

Recently, there has been a movement to say the names of those who have been killed by racial prejudice . . . you know . . . those being killed driving while Black, being in their homes while Black, having mental crises while Black, and so on . . . It is news that is being made public, but it is not new news. Minorities, indigenous and people of colour have been silently killed, and have "disappeared" . . . as is noted in such current day atrocities as our *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women* . . .

Now a new move movement -- "Say Her Name" -- is arising in the States. It is an effort to try to raise awareness by insisting that we say the names of Black Women who have been murdered (such as Breonna Taylor, who was shot and killed in her bed by Louisville police who erroneously entered her home with a no-knock search warrant).

Why? Because if we can say their names, we can know more about their stories.

We add to these women's names the long list of Black men's names (such as Philando Castile, Eric Garner, George Floyd, and last week, Andrew Brown) . . . Black men who have died at the hands of police brutality and systemic racism.

But the power of saying someone's name is more than a social justice movement, it is also a quiet, social and political revolution.

Prior to 1970, *The Washington Post*, a well-recognized and acclaimed U.S. newspaper, had a policy that decreed in their 1963 stylebook:

“Mrs.’ is never used with the Christian name of a woman.

In other words, if married and "Mrs." was used, a woman was known by her husband's Christian name.

Mary Jones was Mrs. John Jones.

Even after John's death, Mary's mail was addressed to Mrs. John Jones. And women were often known as John's wife . . .

This possessive case has a long history. Up until the 1900's, women were considered property of their husbands. If divorced (OMG!), a woman's possessions, including her clothes, etc., belonged to the man . . . but this is another story, for another sermon . . . Being known by your husband's name, not your own, is an experience that some of you know very well . . . in fact, you might want to share some facts of your experience about names during the Coffee Time that follows this service . . .

Right now, I would like to get back to Jesus saying Mary's name.

Only the people that mattered were named in the scriptures, as noted earlier in this sermon.

In addition, in Jewish culture, by not saying someone's name, you removed them from existence. There is a Jewish curse: **"May his (or her or their) name be erased"** . . . it is one of the strongest curses in the Jewish language. A death wish.

By Jesus saying Mary's name, he not only gave her attention and helped her recognize him, but also affirmed her being, and her value, and her worth, and even her existence.

I wonder if we might consider doing the same.

Might I now invite you to watch this video with me:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZ7OJdDSXVo&t=85s&ab_channel=SaturdayNightLive

Remember that . . .

"A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language."

People want to be treated as human beings, not objects. People love hearing their name.

Using their name is the fastest and most reliable way of building rapport and creating a good first and lasting impression.

This week, might we make a commitment to address those we encounter . . . even if by phone . . . and SAY THEIR NAME?

Everyone has a name — use it to bless them, to recognize them, to give them value, and to better connect to them.

You will notice a difference in your relationships.

This is a simple way to make the world a better place.

This is a simple way to help people recognize the Risen Christ present in you and in them.

May it be so. Amen