

He Called Her Name

We met on the day that we moved into our dorm at Elmhurst College. My room was 103; his room was 102. I was beginning my Freshman year...he was beginning his Junior year, after completing his associate's degree at the College of Du Page.

Our connection was immediate, and our friendship was quickly and uniquely deep. Jim and I had the same sense of humor. We loved cars, and stereos, and electronics. Without any hesitation we decided to room together our second year at Elmhurst. Through those two years we made nearly weekly visits to Jim's family in Wheaton, and we made regular trips to my family downstate in Wood River. Jim and I moved his sister Carol to Ann Arbor for graduate school, in one marathon day. And, on a whim, we decided to paint Jim's 1968 Camaro Seamist Green with a quart of alkyd enamel from J. C. Licht...and we used a brush!

For two and a half years, Jim and I were best friends. Then, just seven months after Jim graduated from Elmhurst College, he died from an intentional overdose of prescription pain meds. I was the last person he saw or talked to.

My grandmother...my mom and dad...Jeanie's mom and dad...and her brother: in the past forty years we've lost these six close family members, and I officiated at four of those six funerals. Yet, in spite of these losses, I felt Jim's death the most deeply. And I still think about Jim every day.

Is there someone for you who changed your life forever? Is there someone whose death left you utterly devastated? Has there been a Jim in your life? Friends, Easter is for these dear ones...and for us. So hold them in the preciousness of your memories. Treasure them in the sanctuary of your hearts.

For Mary Magdalene, her Jim was Jesus. No one ever loved her more fully or changed her life more completely. Jesus was everything to her. Without Him, she was nothing. You know, of the named disciples of Jesus, we always count twelve. But Mary Magdalene was the thirteenth. Or was she the first? What we know for certain is that their relationship was the most personal and intense of all those that Jesus shared with His disciples.

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, Mary went to Jesus' tomb alone. With the sentimentality of poetic romance, this is how Charles Austin Miles described that journey:

I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses...

When Mary found the tomb open and vacant, she ran shrieking to Simon Peter and John. So they came to see for themselves. They inspected the empty tomb. They even went inside. And then they went back home!

But Mary was paralyzed by her grief. So she stood beside that violated tomb and wept. Two angels at the tomb asked her, *Why are you crying?* Mary answered, *They have taken away my*

Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him! Then she felt a presence near her. She turned and saw a man. He must be a gardener! When he asked her the same question that the angels had asked, she pleaded with him:

Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

Then He called her name. When He said ***Mary***, she knew instantly who He was. Here's how C. Austin Miles describes that moment:

...and the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.

Mary didn't recognize Him with her eyes. But when He called her name, her heart leapt. In the sound of His loving voice, her grief became joy, her despair turned to hope, and death itself was shattered by undefeatable life. C. Austin Miles says it this way:

He speaks, and the sound of his voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing, and the melody that He gave to me within my heart is ringing.

He called her name, and Mary believed! Love is the melody that rang in Mary's heart. Yes, love wins. Love never ends.

You see, Easter isn't so much about resuscitating dead bodies as it is about resurrecting broken hearts. On Easter, God's everlasting love raises us up to newness of life so that we can raise others up with that same love. God's great victory of life is perfect love. Yes, love wins. Love never ends.

On Good Friday the world had its day, and what a night of terror it was! As Matthew tells us:

...darkness came over the whole land...

Good Friday is that alluring delusion that death and destruction will defeat our enemies and make us safe. We know it well, and we teeter on precipice today. Bombs, guns, poison gas, nuclear holocaust: with reckless abandon we embrace and even worship their power and promise that are utter destruction and death.

But today, that delusion evaporates with Easter's dawn: the dawn of love that heals us and leads us in peace. Yes, love wins. Love never ends.

It's been over forty-one years since Jim died, and I still miss him every day. But the gift of his friendship has never faded, because true friendship is an experience of life and love that never end.

Beloved, Easter is the heart of our faith. And Easter is for our broken hearts. It is intensely personal and deeply vulnerable. It is the love story of Mary and Jesus...the story of love's perfect victory...love that never forsakes us or leaves us alone...love that never ends.

Mary, Jesus is calling your name! And, if we listen really close, we will hear Jesus calling *our* names, too. We will hear Jesus calling us to the risen life that is love's perfect victory...love that never ends. In the spirit of C. Austin Miles:

And He walks with us, and He talks with us, and He tells us we are His own. And the joy we share as He loves us here, is greater than any we've known.

Easter begins when He calls our names. Amen!

Dr. Charles E. Mize
Glenview Community Church
Easter Sunday: April 16, 2017
Colossians 3:1-4
John 20:1-18