

**When We Have Seen the Lord**  
**Pastor Laura Hehner**  
**April 14, 2013**

So, thankfully there are these moments in our lives...

...when we're just overwhelmed.

And I don't mean in the stressful, breath-heavy way we're all familiar with too...

... But in a good way. A way that stuns you.

Makes you stand still for a second, so you can process.

Those moments we feel relieved, or overjoyed---certainly shocked---

... and we know, that in a beautiful, life-giving way,

that things might never be the same,

For us, after seeing what we'd seen, or hearing what we heard.

These moments take all sorts of forms for us.

Sometimes it's a new opportunity to make a passion inside of us real,

Through our work, or our talents.

Could be a fantastically, jaw-dropping, better than fiction date, we'd expected to flop,

That instead went the complete opposite way, and swept us off our feet.

Could be a great moment of sharing with a loved one,

we'd thought we'd lost through too much silence, over time.

A moment of healing, when we'd thought things

were certainly moving away from us being okay....

All of these overwhelm us.

And what do we do, when these things happen?

In those moments, we first feel that joy, right?

Sort of way down deep.

Then there's that next second, when we have to be still,

and just stare, and wonder if it's real...

... And then what happens?

There's that welling up, inside, right?

We feel all of that joy that was bubbling down deep,

Sort of just well up inside of us.

Pushing up higher and higher through our bodies

and rushing deeper through our minds,

Until it all just builds around this unstoppable urge inside of us,

To... tell someone.

...to talk to someone.

To let that rushing flow of excitement finally free from inside of us,

To share with anyone willing to listen.

It's strange how we are with our experiences.

I think, at least on this patch of dirt in space,

That this is a uniquely human trait.

Not all creatures on this earth are like that.

Animals---well, they just don't have the linguistic complexity

(at least as far as we know)

To communicate in that kind of detail with each other.

From what we know, they're not set up

to experience space and time in the same way,

To share themselves from the deep, like we are

(again, at least as far as science has so far proven).

They each take their experiences one by one,

each one, surely, instinctually changing them

into the way they are in their environment,

So they can learn and adapt and survive....

But they don't talk about those moments. It simply molds them. Forms them.

And what is seen of them after their experiences, is only the end result---the *product*---

---of the moments that have come before the last one.

...We're not like that.

According to anthropologists, humans have a unique way---

--a different way---of experiencing time.

The past and the present.

And above all of that, we have a more complicated way

of projecting and predicting---imagining----what might come for us later.

We humans... we share what's inside of us. What we've seen. What we've felt.

Things that are no longer present right in front of our eyes, but leave something in our hearts,

that we want to give and give and give again,  
through the act of sharing those moments... those experiences, with the life around us.

Now, before we move into our scripture readings for today,  
and tie these experiences of ours into what happened right after Easter morning,  
I want to look into this just a little deeper.

...Because it's weird to me, you know?

Why do we do this? I was wondering about it, just the other day.

My friend Shannon and I were catching up with each other over the phone,

Sharing the most impactful experiences we've had since we last talked with each other...

... and I started wondering about this *sharing*.

Why do we do it?

Sure it's a fact that it's a human trait.

But... what brings this drive inside of us, to talk about what we've seen, with other people?

There were a few things that popped into mind.

In those wonderful, breath-taking, mind-stunning moments of joy

that make us want to pick up the phone,

And just talk about what happened with anyone who will listen...

I don't think that welling up inside---that drive to talk---

--comes only for the sake of pure information sharing. Updating.

There's an element of that, sure.

But there's something more, too.

What is it?

Wanting others to also feel the gladness overtaking us?

Yeah, I think that's there, too. We want to let out the sounds of our thankfulness,  
and hope others can feel it with us...

...But I think it's also, to *spread* that moment we felt.

Give it a wider space than just that one, tiny, millisecond instant we felt it.

To make it last longer, and the reality wider by repeating it---

--giving it again and again---the best we can---

--to other minds to experience it---to feel it---too.

We share the past to keep what happened before, in the present.

And possibly, even continue moving those moments of joy, into the future.

We do it, so those moments we felt, can continue to live,

and to be felt for as long as possible, by as many as possible.

When we share our joy... when we share what's changed us and moves us,

We're taking the tiny little bits of reality we've been a part of,

And moving that truth from being only inside of ourselves,

To exist past you. Past your own life... into reality—the life---all around you.

Interesting to think about.

Okay... so here's how it connects.

Our scripture readings for today, comes again from John Ch 20. That Easter moment, when Mary Magdalene walks to the tomb, at first desperate, full of despair, and finds it empty.

Then God comes to her, and comforts her.

Still thinking all is lost, she turns, and nearly runs face first into Jesus.

Alive, right in front of her. Changed. New. Resurrected.

From Chapter 20, starting at verse 17b,

Jesus says to her:

But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

It goes on to describe what happens after she gets there....

Verse 19:

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

(Hard to imagine the kind of shock they must have felt....)

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them *again*, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24 But

Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

And later, past whatever doubt Thomas felt

hearing the excitement of the disciples, through their words alone,

he gets to experience his own wonderful moment, himself...

From verse 26:

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

See, just as in any of those amazing, mind-stunning,

soul-growing moments we feel while we're alive...

This desire to share.

This drive to spread the reality we've felt inside of ourselves to the life around us...

... it doesn't stay restricted to our falling in love,

or finding a more passion-satisfying life-securing job...

In our lives, as spiritual seekers. As people who open their minds and hearts to God,

And experience God, and are overjoyed by God, and shocked by God, and changed by God...

That same feeling wells up inside of us.

And we want to let it out. To give it to other people.

And I think that feeling inside of us, exists on a spiritual level for us,  
As a way.... As a method... as a conduit...  
For God's life and God's work in *our* lives,  
To keep spreading. To keep growing. To stay alive.  
To move from the past, and keep breathing into the present,  
and keep pushing and moving, into the moments of our future, together.

With all of this, I think that beyond that *drive* inside that we naturally feel, to share...  
We're not only compelled, but *called*...  
To speak of the things we've felt with God.  
To let out the joy we've felt in God...  
...and to help others feel God, too---the best we can...  
...In the same ways we have ourselves, inside of their own souls.

Now, we hesitate to do this a lot.  
Myself included.  
You always want to sort of feel out the situation.  
Knowing that what you're about to say will likely be met with some doubt.  
We know this, but we're called to do it anyway.  
Not to push it. But to share it.  
Not to force it into someone else's belief and understanding...  
but to simply let it out. And let *be*, in the space between us.

We see, in the case of Thomas...

The other disciples, like Mary Magdalene, they let it go,

to breathe and be real, outside of themselves...

Like Mary Magdalen, they tell Thomas, "I have seen the Lord!"

But what does Thomas do?

He doubts, of course.

Happens all of the time with us too, of course...

A lot of times, we'll share things---let the truth of what we've felt

break out from our throats and hearts...

To live longer and deeper in the world and people around us...

...but we know those words we share...

... well they sometimes just aren't convincing to people, as words alone...

The door is shut in their minds, at first...

... and I like the way John mentions this in the retelling.

(The gospel of John---full of symbols! Watch out for them!)

John talks about the doors being *locked* for the disciples, out of *fear*,

when Mary Magdalene comes to share...

And again, about the door being *shut* when Jesus enters to be with Thomas...

But what we do, when we share our experience of God with others...

... when we take the moments we've lived and felt, and bring them out into the world

For others to feel inside themselves, too...

... even if it's not at first accepted, or taken in...

... what we do, is we subtly unlock a door. Open a door...

... create a space for thinking... for consideration...

... that might eventually open up those people around us,

that might quietly unlock that door,

For God to enter.

For God to move into their lives...

It makes a space of possibility, for those people around us,

to have an experience of God, themselves,

That will well up inside of them,

and move them to continue spreading that love, and warmth, and friendship,

And shocking experience they will have of God, themselves,

into the reality around them.

So they might say what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 150

(the *last* and the shortest, and most complete Psalm of the Hebrew Bible),

when he said:

Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! 2  
 Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! 3  
 Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! 4 Praise him with  
 tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! 5 Praise him with clanging  
 cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! 6 Let everything that breathes praise the  
 LORD! Praise the LORD!

In those days just after Easter, this is exactly the feeling

the disciples worked every day to say, themselves...

From Pentecost, through the rest of their lives.

And when we have a feeling of God. When God changes us, and moves us,

And brings to our lives that wonderful moment that wells up,

that we just can't keep in...

...let's let ourselves let it out. Let it be.

Let's let ourselves spread God, so that others can feel God too.

Let's allow ourselves to help the movements of God in the world

keep going, and living in all of the reality that touches into our own.

This first Sunday after Easter, let's rejoice in those moments,

when we can say, "I have seen the Lord!"

And maybe open the minds and hearts, and souls around us, into feeling that joy too.

Because that is the work of God.

And the glory of God is too big to hide. Too big to keep inside...

...Something we can't help but share, and bring into new life...

Amen.

