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Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Santa Rosa, CA

April 5, 2026

Easter Day, Year A, Revised Common Lectionary

Jeremiah 31:1-6

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18

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“Whom are you looking for?”

The summer after my junior year of college, our university concert choir went on tour, singing in cathedrals and concert halls all over central Europe. I had a good friend named Dave, a fellow tenor, and there was a girl in the choir named Lindsey who I kind of had my eye on. Another girl named Julia had a bit of a crush on Dave. One day the four of us went around Berlin together and explored the legendary department store called the KaDeWe. But it turned out Lindsey and Dave only had eyes for each other. They spent the rest of the tour in a torrid romance. And Julia and I, who didn't know each other all that well, ended up wandering around a German department store together. She was cool.

Later this spring we'll have been married for nineteen years.

That summer I thought I was looking for Lindsey. But what I found was Julia. What I thought was a romantic disappointment turned into the great love story of my life. Sometimes it's not what we *think* we're looking for, it's what we find instead.

“Whom are you looking for?” Jesus asks Mary Magdalene at the tomb. There's resonance to this question, because it's the very same question he asked three days earlier to the soldiers who came to arrest him. We heard that story on Good Friday. But today the words are the same but everything else is different.

Mary knows who she's looking for; or she certainly thinks she does. She's looking for the lifeless body of someone she's loved: a rabbi, a teacher, a friend who transformed her life and gave her a glimpse of who God really is, but who she saw rejected and mocked and executed. She comes to perform the last act of love available to her, the last act of love available to so many throughout the centuries, especially women: tending the body of someone you've lost. A sad, bittersweet, tender act in a world where death is final. And when even that act is denied her, when the body is gone, it feels like one more brutal loss.

So when she hears the question, she gives the only answer she can imagine. “Whom are you looking for?” “Sir, if you've taken him away, tell me where you've laid him.”

Until she hears her name.

“Mary,” he says. Just that one word. But in that word everything shifts. The shock of recognition; the awe mixed with joy mixed with some kind of terror as everything she knows about what’s possible in this world turns inside out. “Mary,” Jesus says, and Mary knows him because she is known by him, known by name, just as God says in the words we heard this morning from the book of Jeremiah: “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

Mary never did find what she was looking for. She found something she could never have looked for, because it was never possible until now. Mary came with the best love she had available: the love of grief, the love that says, “It’s over.” God answered with a love she didn’t know how to ask for. She looked for a body, she found a living Lord.

And I wonder: whom are you looking for?

Whatever brought you here this morning—deep faith or deep doubt, a joyful habit or a loved one who dragged you, grief or curiosity or something you can't quite name—Jesus asks you the same question. And the good news is that what God has for you is even bigger than what you came looking for. God invites you to share the life of Jesus himself. It's a life that's rich and abundant, full of meaning, purpose, and joy. It's a life of hope: not a cheap hope that says don't worry, everything will be fine, but a deeper hope that says even when everything is as bad as it can possibly be, God is stronger and resurrection is coming. It's the life of the one who has died and is alive again for ever, and is here among us when we gather in his name.

Today Jesus is here in this place to meet you. He is saying your name. He loves you with an everlasting love. And he invites you into a new adventure in a world where death has been defeated.