

I put together a word cloud of gratefulness from messages submitted to me by people in the church

The depth of connection to God reverberated through the words people wrote

Some were short and others more expansive, but behind all of them there was substance

They spoke to me of a community that walks with Jesus even in the difficult times

We have learned to keep our eyes on Jesus, even when we don't know what to do

It doesn't minimize the hard times—they showed up in the words you sent as well

Uncertainty and fear, even death

But we hold on to Jesus all the same

I am drawn to the story of the resurrection in John chapter 20 and 21

The story is familiar...

Jesus was dead and the women went to the tomb to anoint his body

But the tomb was empty, and they were afraid—not knowing what to make of the empty tomb

Mary Magdalene is distraught and looking for Jesus, so she mistakes him for the gardener

But when Jesus calls her by name, her response is instantaneous...

*She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).*

*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.*

*John 20:16, 18 NRSV*

The disciples also didn't understand and were afraid, locked in a room together

Jesus appeared in the room with them and showed them his hands and side...

*Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. John 20:20 NRSV*

Thomas missed the encounter and couldn't believe the words of his friends

Again, the disciples were in a locked room and this time, Thomas was with them

Jesus appeared to them and invited Thomas to touch him and know he was alive

*Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" John 20:28 NRSV*

Then some of the disciples moved north to the Sea of Galilee—home to familiarity and fishing

They fished all night, but caught nothing when Jesus said to fish on the other side of the boat

There were so many fish in the net, they couldn't haul it into the boat

John said to Peter, *"It is the Lord!"* and Peter jumped into the sea and went to shore

Jesus made them breakfast and they ate with him... *they knew it was the Lord. John 21:12 NRSV*

They all recognized Jesus as their Lord when they came face to face with him after the resurrection

They had a direct encounter with the Living Christ who made himself known to his friends

Jesus returned to them, and allowed them to recognize him and even eat a meal together

This direct encounter with Jesus was transformative and gave them new life and hope

Today I'm grateful for each one of you that is part of our community at North Seattle Friends Church

We also live life out of this direct encounter with the Living Christ

Christ is our Present Teacher and Lord

Our messages of gratitude speak of the depth of experiential knowing of Jesus, who is with us!

Thank you!

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!