

## HAPPY TO KNOW THE LORD

Our sermon for this Festival of St. Mary Magdalene, which is proclaimed in our time of remembering God's calling Gretel Glen to eternal life in Christ, is taken from our readings. Hear the Word again as our hope becomes more clearly revealed through this translated verse:

*Jesus says to her, "O Mariam."  
Having turned, to that, she says to Him (in) Aramaic, "O Rabbonai!" (that which is being called, "Teacher").<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Ruth, Margo, Alexandra, family and friends of Margarete Wilhelmine Reichhardt Glen, God has gathered us here today to remember the gift of the Faith that He has given to His beloved daughter, Gretel. As we do so, we remember that she often recounted the tale of her years of wandering from the Staatskirche (State Church) in Germany (with its "Brown-Shirt pastor" and Nazi flags hanging over the Altar of the Lord). On account of those life realities, and many other reasons, she had drifted away from God and His mercies in Jesus.

Yet, God was patient with her. She would go on to tell how diligent He was in following after her. That is declared most clearly today, in a note that most of us did not know she wrote and carried in her wallet.

In careful handwriting, she told how she found out that Jesus died for her sins. She marveled at the revelation that she learned He had been looking for her a long time. She declared, in writing, that God is her Savior. She proclaimed that her life changed for the better when she returned to Him. She ended it her personal note with this simple statement of the Faith: "I am happy to know the Lord."

Consider that confession in light of today's reading. In it, Mary had witnessed an empty tomb wherein she had known Jesus' lifeless Body had been laid. She had

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<sup>1</sup> John 20:16.

become overcome with grief. With her eyes clouded with tears, she beheld a Man standing by her. (We know it was Jesus risen from the dead, because we have the rest of the narrative. Mary was experiencing the resurrection without all the facts. She was living it). Jesus and Mary of Magdala (a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee) then had this exchange:

*Jesus says to her, "O Mariam."  
Having turned, to that, she says to Him (in) Aramaic, "O Rabbonai!" (that which is being called, "Teacher").<sup>2</sup>*

It is truly fitting that today is the day we have chosen to reflect upon God's grace and mercy in delivering Gretel from the troubles and strife that come to humans in this mortal life. First, this year, during our Vacation Bible School, this is the day we will remember Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection in our teaching about the Easter Feast. It is also a Wednesday, the day of the week that, for quite some time, has been the day that Gretel had been gathered with other sinner/saints to hear God's Word and receive His forgiveness, life, and salvation in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Further, it must be more than coincidence that this funeral service takes place on the festival of St. Mary Magdalene. Like Gretel, she had not known the Lord for many years. Like Gretel, Mary had faced many years of a life without full and complete assurance of the grace, forgiveness and the certainty of blessed eternal life that comes only from intimate knowledge of Jesus the Christ.

The woman the Church now calls St. Mary Magdalene was known be one of those whom Jesus had healed from evil spirits and illnesses.<sup>3</sup> Again we have a parallel to Gretel's life these past few years. Today, the Church now declares that Saint Margarete Glen has been fully healed from all evil and illnesses.

That is why her mortal remains stand covered in white next to the baptismal

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<sup>2</sup> John 20:16.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Luke 8:2.

font. Long ago, God washed away Gretel's sins with the water and Word of Holy Baptism. Though she wandered from that bath of regeneration, God brought her back, and repeatedly presented her clean again. This He did every time she confessed her sins and He spoke His blood-bought forgiveness over and into her. He regularly gave her His cleansing Body and Blood for the forgiveness of her sins.

Today, the second part of the gifts which come from the Sacrament of the Altar that Gretel received regularly on Wednesday mornings such as this can become truly clear for us. That is, in the Lord's Supper, she received strengthening to life everlasting. That bore her through, in the Faith, the trials that came upon her in the past few weeks before she fell asleep in the Lord.

God's strengthening gave her strength to respond. This she did toward the end with a few words for sure. Yet her she would hold on with a firm grip when God's Word through the hymns was sung to her.

Now, that is about enough of that remembrance. We turn now to that which kept Gretel in the Church, and, at funeral and memorial services, in the kitchen of this building. The fact that God has brought us here today is testimony to the power of God's Word. For if human desires were what really drove the Lord's services in this place, there would be no funeral service today, here or anywhere.

Yet, God wills that His Word be proclaimed to all people, and most especially to those who are feeling, knowing, and experiencing the burden of their sins, and sin in this world. That is to say, it is to be proclaimed to us who grieve this day. It is to be declared even those Christians here who grieve with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the blessed dead.

Even so, we mourn because of sin's impact in our lives. We shed tears because we are going through an earthly loss. That puts us in the place of St. Mary, whose

confession of the Faith is remembered today. Hear again the narrative that declares for all time her words when she met Jesus after He had conquered sin, death, and hell for her:

*Jesus says to her, "O Mariam."  
Having turned, to that, she says to Him (in) Aramaic, "O Rabbonai!" (that which is being called, "Teacher").<sup>4</sup>*

Mary knew of Jesus' power to raise the dead. Why, just the week before, she would have beheld Lazarus arisen from the grave! Yet, her human grief clouded her knowledge. Her feelings interfered with Jesus' promises and all the promises of the triune God contained in the Old Covenant texts which Mary had known for years. Mary's reaction to Jesus' calling her by name is humanly understandable – she clung to Him. Yet, Jesus continues to tell her:

*Not of Me you must continue to cling, for not have I ascended to the Father... But you must go to the brothers of Me and you must have said to them, "I continue to go up to the Father of Me and the Father of you all and the God of Me and the God of you all."<sup>5</sup>*

First, Jesus gives the command to the woman now rejoicing in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. He calls her not to cling to Him, as if she would hold Him to earth. According to the will of God, that was not to be.

Second, Jesus gives her the command to give the simple message to His disciples that He would ascend to be with God the Father. That is, He was going to take human flesh – raised from death, glorified and in new life – and place it back at the pinnacle of Creation. He would take that which was lost in Adam's Fall, that which brought death into the world, and place it alive before the Father.

There He would intercede for sinners like you and I. There He will reign until the Last Day. That Day, which is coming soon, will be when all people who have ever

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<sup>4</sup> John 20:16.

<sup>5</sup> John 20:17.

lived and died, will be raised from the ashes of dust. They all will see Jesus with their own eyes.

Those who, like our sister, the one we are now free to call Saint Gretel, fell asleep in the Faith, will be caught up to reign with Him forever. They, she, will hear words like these : “Receive the Kingdom prepared for you all before the foundation of the world!” We know that because, *St. Mary the Magdalene continued to go and was continuing to report to the disciples:*

*“I have seen the Lord” – and that these things He had said to her.<sup>6</sup>*

Because of her witness, centuries after the fact, Gretel was able to hear Jesus’ Words anew and to believe in Him. On account of the eye-witness resurrection of our Lord, you are also free to have joy. You may know that to be true for all who confess in a manner such as Gretel, “I am happy to know the Lord.”

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Funeral Sermon: Margarete “Gretel” Wilhelmine Reichhardt Glen

Festival of St. Mary Magdalene, Wednesday

Psalm 23; Proverbs 31:10-31; Acts 13:26-31; John 20:1-2, 10-18

July 22, 2015

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>6</sup> John 20:18