

Sermon Title: **“I Have Seen the Lord”**

Bible: **John 20:1-18**

When: on Easter Sunday, April 17th, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, you are risen. You live with us, and you are in us. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Is It the End?

Do you remember your graduation day? In my experience, my high school and college graduation days were not good. That’s because I did not know what to do next. When I graduated from high school, I failed to enter college. Because entering college right away is the usual norm in Korea, I had to have a gap year. I needed to study one more year. When I entered my college, I thought that it was done. It was the end! But I had to take many classes and exams again. I might be good at learning, but I do not like to take exams. Where does it end?

Because of my experience of my gap year between high school and college, I made a careful plan after college. My major in college was theology. I like to talk about theology, and I love the Bible. So, I wanted to learn more about the Bible, especially about the Hebrew scripture or the Old Testament. In my senior year of college, I learned not only biblical

Hebrew but also modern Hebrew. But it was difficult to find the right professor. To make a long story short, I gave up entering graduate school. Again, I had to have a gap year.

Actually, it was not a gap year, but several gap years. To enter another graduate school or a seminary in Korea, I needed at least one or two years for their entrance exam. For about three years, I prepared myself, while saving money for the tuition. At that time, my girlfriend came to California to study English. I decided to follow her, and look for a seminary in California. I was accepted to two seminaries, one in Northern California, near San Francisco, and the other in Southern California. Even though my girlfriend lived near Irvine at that time, I decided to attend a seminary near San Francisco, because they gave me more scholarship funds, and because I could be on the same timeline with Mihyun anyway. When I was in Korea, and Mihyun was in California, there was a 16 hour time difference. I just wanted to be with my loved one on the same timeline. At that time, I did not know how big California was. California is about four times bigger than South Korea. I could not imagine San Francisco being about 8 hours driving distance away from where she was. Anyway, I thought that I had achieved the goal to enter the seminary. I thought that it was done. I thought that it was the end. But, my seminary life in a foreign country was just getting started. Where would it end?

After graduating from seminary, I had many other gap years in the process of becoming a pastor. Because of my lack of ministry experiences, because of my poor English, because of the differences of the denominations, and their ordination processes, and because of the complexity of my visa status, I thought that I was done. I was looking for the end, in order to

give up my dream. I was asking myself a lot, “Is this the end?” “I tried enough of it, right?” “I can stop here, right?” But interestingly, there was no end. My journey to ordination was not stopped.

Not only achieving my ordination, but also life itself on the way to it was not easy. I thought that it was the end many times. After I helped to move furniture, I developed serious back pain. Literally, I could not move at all. The only thing that I could do was to cry. I did not know where to call. My insurance was not good. I did not have any emergency money. I thought that it was the end. But, thankfully, it was not the end.

2. It is Not the End!

Today’s Gospel reading of John taught us that death is not the end. On the first day of Easter, there was neither joy nor celebration at first. Jesus’ followers thought that death was the end. They came to the tomb, not because they expected the resurrection. They might have come to check on the body of Jesus, because it could have been moved away. What they looked for was not life, but the body of Jesus. When they saw the empty tomb, their sorrows became magnified, and their fears were increased. The two disciples came back home. Mary Magdalene was looking for the dead body, because she thought that death was the end. Even when she saw the resurrected Jesus, she thought that he was a gardener. She could not recognize Jesus, until Jesus called her name. Then, Mary became the first witness of the resurrection. She said, “I have seen the Lord.” Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

3. We Are the People of Hope and a New Beginning!

When we hear the news of war, is it the end? When we experience gun violence, is it the end? When we see a disaster, is it the end? When we struggle with this Pandemic, is it the end? When my body does not listen to me, is it the end? When we make small and big mistakes, is it the end? When our life is shaken and out of control, is it the end? When we face death, is it the end?

Darkness cannot defeat the light. There is no place for death in the face of the resurrection. Our Lord, Jesus Christ is the light and the resurrection. There is hope and a new beginning. Our community and our world need Jesus, hope, and a new beginning. They need us as well. Because of our resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, we are the people of hope and a new beginning! His victory is our victory, and his resurrection is our resurrection. Wherever our hands reach out, wherever we go, our Lord will be with us. Then, there will be hope and a new beginning. That's because Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed in us, with us, and among us.

Closing Prayer

O Lord, you are in us, with us, and among us, because you are the living and resurrected Jesus Christ. Please help us to bring your hope and your new beginning. Please guide us to go wherever you lead us. In Jesus' name. Amen.