

John's gospel lesson contains two things today: 1 truth and 1 testimony. The truth? Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. The tomb is empty; there's no reason to continue to look for a body that isn't there. We have our grand celebration for this truth each year on Easter. The flowers are here, you're here, the scripture readings leading up to Jesus the Christ are read. God's plan for saving us from ourselves has come to fruition. That's the truth.

Now, the testimony. Mary helps us with this when she proclaims boldly, **"I have seen the Lord!"** Not everyone will have this testimony because to make it, our hearts have to be open, our eyes attentive, our ears set to hearing, and our mind focused on who God is and what God wants us to do in the world.

"I have seen the Lord!" is a testimony. It should be shouted from the rooftop, discussed over tea, lifted up during meetings, celebrated at church, celebrated at home, and celebrated in the neighborhood. **"I have seen the Lord!"** is the center of our lives because it's who we are.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our battle cry when people ask us why we're here in the west end of Hagerstown.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our marching orders when people ask us why we have a food pantry.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when people ask us about the clothes closet.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when we welcome the stranger.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when people ask us why we've changed.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when we invite people to church.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when we call folks who have fallen away.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when we give.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our answer when we pray, when we love, when we show grace, when we show up, and when we show out. **"I have seen the Lord!"** is who we are and who God wants us to be.

"I have seen the Lord!" is our testimony. We are the people, right here on the corners of Church and Winter Streets, who have seen the risen Christ. And we are required, like Mary, to profess it with words, thoughts, and deeds to everyone we meet.

Family of God, may you ever be found professing to everyone you meet, **"I have seen the Lord!"**