

Talking Point – Our Redeemer Lives - Delivered April 4 2021

Acts 10:34-43; Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; **John 20:1-18 (Sermon)**

Our Focal Scripture this morning is John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Good Easter morning Church!

What a wonderful joyous time it is, to greet the new morning knowing that Our Redeemer Lives!

What a change our scripture goes through from Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday.

The scriptures of Good Friday tell of a palpable relatable sadness and defeated feeling among Jesus disciples, because they didn't yet understand the meaning of the cross or the triumphant nature of the rising of the cross.

As James Cone wrote about it, "God could transmit defeat into triumph, ugliness into beauty, despair into hope, the cross into the resurrection."

Yes this same Mary and the disciples that we encounter just a few verses earlier are now face to face with the miracle of what God has done.

Their crying is turned into a hallelujah, He is risen!!!

Their grief and their hearts went up on that cross along with their Lord.

Their hope for a brighter tomorrow and their hope for deliverance from the hand of Roman oppression, their hope for the world their Jesus had described was awash in the tears at the foot of the cross, but now Sunday has dawned, and they are seeing the world and their circumstances through new eyes!

As Paul proclaims in Acts 10, “Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all” and “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

(acts 10:34, 38)

That God raised him on the 3rd day” and we are his witnesses to those miracles and to the ultimate miracle.

In being raised from the dead, in conquering death, the disciples also became different as well.

They were, as we are, children of the resurrection.

Resurrection, in all it's glory.

The understanding that if God alive in Jesus Christ had conquered hell, sin and the grave, that those who follow Him are conquers as well.

This Jesus of Nazareth, as Isaiah declared “will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken...” “...this is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:8-9.

Their understanding of who Jesus was and what He could do, was resurrected.

Their redeemer was alive!

Just as Jesus was changed in an instant, so too they were changed the moment they realized that Jesus was not dead, but alive.

Christ's resurrection is central to the Christian faith.

The Incarnation and crucifixion were necessary preludes, but the resurrection is the keystone of Jesus' ministry. Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith also is in vain... If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins.... But now Christ has been raised from the dead. He became the first fruits of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 20).

Seeing the risen Christ transformed Jesus' little band of disciples and gave them courage to come out from behind locked doors to face danger in Christ's name. There is no other explanation for their newfound and persistent courage than that they had seen the risen Christ.

Three of the Gospels (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1) don't emphasize and speak of this as the third day after the crucifixion, but rather as the first day of the week.

Perhaps wanting to emphasize the new day ushered in by Jesus' resurrection.

Indeed, each protestant and the Catholic religion honor Sunday as "the Lord's Day" to commemorate each Sunday, or first day of the week, "**Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went early, while it was still dark**" (John 18:1a) as special, one befitting a Resurrected people come to worship their Resurrected Jesus.

John notes that it is 'still dark'. Which underscores not only the time of day, but where the disciples, Mary, the women, and the 12 were emotionally.

Emotionally, they were in the darkness that often follows the death of a loved one, particularly one who has died such a brutal state sponsored death as Roman crucifixion.

But in this moment "darkness" is also an apt description of where their collective understanding was regarding Jesus as The Risen One.

Yes, they loved their Jesus and they mourned his death, and were back at the grave

Mary concludes, logically enough, that someone has taken Jesus' body from the tomb.

Perhaps it was the authorities visiting one further indignity on Jesus.

Perhaps it was grave robbers.

Imagine the emotional impact of finding the desecrated grave of a loved one.

Mary has been grieving, yes, but now she is shocked—horrified.

Her grief has turned into horror realizing that the stone has been removed and their beloved Jesus is gone.

In her horror and grief she now runs to the only male disciples who remained in the vicinity rather than fleeing with the other disciples.

The presence of these two disciples at the tomb is important, because it establishes two legal witnesses (the number required by Torah law) to the empty tomb.

As a woman, Mary has no legal standing as a witness, yet she will be the first to begin to tell the story of the resurrection.

“They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb” (v. 2b).

Mary sees but fails to see.

She makes assumptions based on her experience that bodies do not simply disappear.

Presumably, the authorities have removed the body as part of their effort to erase Jesus' memory—or perhaps grave robbers have stolen the body.

“and we don't know where they have laid him” (v. 2c).

Note the plural “we,” which suggests that Mary had companions on this visit, which is the way that the Synoptic Gospels report it.

But it is what happens when Jesus begins speaking to her that is transformative for her.

“When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, and didn't know that it was Jesus” (v. 14). Even seeing him, Mary fails to recognize Jesus.

Perhaps her vision is clouded by tears. Perhaps her grief so overwhelms her that she cannot think clearly.

We often see what we expect to see and fail to recognize the unexpected that is right in front of our face..

“Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” (v. 15a). Jesus repeats the question that the angels just asked.

It is in the moment that Christ reveals Himself to be not the gardener but the one whom her spirit longs for.

In a moment reminiscent of the John 10:27 declaration “my sheep know my voice”.

When Jesus calls her name, “Mary” she recognizes him. And calls to him in the title familiar to their relationship “Rabbouni!”

What a wonderful moment when we move from unknowing, from not understanding, from darkness to light of understanding.

To recognize that Jesus is closer than we think or know.

Mary Magdeline, “I have seen the Lord”

She doesn't speak of the angels who greeted her.

She no longer speaks as the woman of grief who arrived at the tomb.

She proclaims the rising of the Lord!

That is how Jesus often comes to us.

We are in the middle of our grieving, in the middle of our emotions that we are experiencing, and we don't see the Jesus who is reaching out to us. The Jesus who is right before us.

How often do we in the middle of our own struggles fail to see the Living Lord before us.

How often do we get caught up in all the drama this life can bring yet fail to understand the God right before our eyes?

We have all been Mary. Eyes clouded with tears. Heart aching and yearning to undo what has been done.

Mary reminds us that we too must open our eyes and look for Jesus.

Mary reminds us that we must ask Jesus to reveal Himself to us so that we might see Him as He is with us.

There is no pain in life that Jesus will not go with us.

We just have to have the spiritual eyes to see Him.

The spiritual ears to hear Him calling our name.

It is often in what we think is our darkest moment of our lives that Christ is walking closest with us.

He will meet us where we are and he will give us instruction to get back to where we need to be.

Jesus asked of Mary “woman, why are you weeping?”

He knows the things we are struggling with and asks us the same.

Resurrection Sunday is the moment to be reminded and to celebrate that our Redeemer Lives!!

The Risen One who conquered hell, sin and the grave, is mighty for us, is loving for us.

He still hears our needs and still longs to satisfy what our souls yearn for.

And how did Mary respond to Jesus?

She goes and declares to the disciples “I have seen the Lord” and spread the news of all that he had said to her.

Our great question this morning is: Have you seen the Lord?

He is calling to each of us to get closer to Him.

He asks us to come closer in prayer and in relationship.

Beloved of God, have you seen the Lord?

If you have witnessed Him, will you tell others of what you have seen, heard and experienced?

Will you be a witness that proclaims, "I Know My Redeemer Lives"?

Amen.