

Easter 2021

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[0 : 0 0] All right. Hey, good to see y'all. How y'all doing? Sweet. Good, good, good. That last song got to me, so I'm like still like got a little snot running out my nose and, you know, wiping the tears out of my eyes. But those of you who don't know me, I am Jesse, one of the pastors here. Thanks for coming and celebrating Easter with us. This is like the big, big moment for Christians. And so today I'm going to be speaking from an account of the resurrection, and it's out of John 20. So if you know where that is in the Bible, you can turn there. If you don't have a Bible, that's okay. We actually always throw the verses up on the screen for you to read along with.

So let's go for it. We're going to be in verse 11 of John 20, and it says this, but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.

And she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabbani, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her. So earlier this year, this account of the resurrection grabbed my attention.

I've always kind of read this a little bit from a distance, so to speak, not because I have bad eyesight I'm talking about. I just kind of read through the facts of the story and what happened, but never really connected with what Mary was experiencing as this encounter with Jesus evolves.

And here is how I typically read it, right? Women crying, Jesus fixes it, kind of like guys' expectations for marriage, how it's supposed to go, like wives crying, me come say something, fix, go.

[2 : 4 3] But there is actually a lot of beautiful things going on in this story, in this encounter. And it can't be understood from a distance. It's an encounter that moves from deep anguish to pure joy, and it's actually in the details as we slow down and look that we see the power of the resurrection.

And at first look, we can draw an obvious conclusion as to why Mary is weeping, right? Her close friend, her teacher, just died. Not to mention, he's the guy that cast seven demons out of her.

I mean, they got some history, right? She's walked with him closely for three years, and he was a good friend. A good friend is there when you need them.

But, you know, for us, I don't think any of us like what Jesus is able to do and what he did for her. We don't probably have like an equivalent friend in our Rolodex just like that, you know?

Losing a good friend would bring many of us to tears, but Jesus was more to Mary than just a friend. Without him, she is worse off than we actually realize, which is true for us.

[3 : 53] Without Jesus, we are worse off than we know. This Mary that we're reading about, it says that she's called Mary Magdalene, and that's not her last name. So often the Bible just uses a person's first name.

That's who they refer to, unless it's trying to give you more information about them. In John 19, just the previous chapter at the foot of the cross, it records three Marys standing at the foot of the cross.

Disciples of Jesus. Apparently, it was a real popular name back then. But the two other Marys are defined by their relationship, right? It says Mary, the mother of Jesus, right?

Mary, the mom who Jesus is her son. And then it talks about another Mary, the wife of Clopas. It's a bummer of a name. Just thank God you got your name and not Clopas.

Like, good job, parents. And then it says Mary Magdalene. Or Mary from the town of Magdala. Which wasn't like a cool thing.

[4 : 51] It's not like, hey, I'm Snoop Dogg from the LBC type of thing. Now, this is an ancient way of saying, Mary, no husband, no family. And most likely, this meant that Mary Magdalene had no children or husband at the time.

Which today, we look at that, that's like, okay, that's not really a big deal. Maybe she was too busy working and building her career or doing ministry with Jesus. She just didn't have time to, you know, get a husband and settle down.

But that would be kind of a viable option for us today. You know, we look at that, but not back then. Because the way that society was structured was around family units. And back then in the family unit, the men had significant importance and a lot more independence than women did.

Women didn't just marry back then for romance only. Man, marriage was like survival and safety. Back then, it was an agrarian society, which means you did everything yourself, right?

You built your own house. You grew and gathered your own food. Your family had to do the work of Bob the Builder and Harris Teeter all in one. That's what was happening back then. And women back then, you couldn't even own property.

[5 : 59] You didn't, you know, you weren't able to start your own little, like, you know, front store shop or Etsy thing to, like, make some money. That life was just very different. There was very, very limited options.

Now, and on top of all that, to be an unmarried woman living outside your father's house was a cultural taboo. You were looked upon with suspicion wherever you went, and the worst was assumed about your character.

Long story short, you were just a social pariah, lowest of the low. Society turned their back on you. And this made women like Mary vulnerable to the appetites of worthless men, too, which in turn meant that no man would be interested in marrying her.

She is stuck. Can you see how stuck Mary is in this moment? A bleak future ahead of her. All this reality is hitting her at the tomb.

She is weeping. And it's not like little sniffles like what I was doing over there as we were seeing. And it's like that word for weeping is wailing. I want you to think, like, big, loud groans of sorrow and anguish, snot running down the face.

[7 : 11] I mean, she is letting it go. Why? Why? Because everything she had gained when Jesus came into her life is gone, right? Man, he was the first man who saw her and took compassion on her.

Cast out seven demons, brought her into his discipleship school. She got to travel around with his entourage, which actually would have changed the game for her life. Being attached to a rabbi in those days, a teacher, was a big deal.

It was almost kind of like being adopted into a family. With Jesus as her teacher, she didn't have to worry about starving or where she was going to get food or being taken care of.

And there was dignity restored to her. Society would have looked on her in a different way because she was attached to this teacher of great importance and prominence that everybody had heard about and was talking about and who did amazing teaching and signs and wonders.

And not only that, with the group she traveled, a bunch of dudes, I mean, there was safety in that group for her, right? Like, you didn't mess with Mary anymore. But now Jesus is dead.

[8 : 17] His disciples are running and scattering and splintering away from each other. So Mary is heading back down to the bottom of the heap. She's going to be hungry and despised and scorned and ridiculed and abused, and she's going to face it all alone.

We all have trials and difficulties in life, right? This isn't me trying to compare like, well, you know, Mary had a lot worse than you, so suck it up.

No, I think this helps us get into the understanding of what it really is like without Jesus in our lives. I mean, for some of us, we're experiencing some darkness now.

Life is tough and we're suffering. And we're looking ahead to a pretty bleak future as well. We don't have much hope for a future. So some of us can really relate to that.

But then there's probably a lot of us in the room who just can't. We look ahead and, man, we see blue skies and rainbows and boat rides and grandkids and stakes and white Jeep Wrangler classic body with big, huge tires.

[9 : 21] I'm just letting it all out. It's all coming out of my heart right now. But the future looks bright and beautiful for many of us. And you know what?

We can actually take security in that. I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but we can put so much hope in that. We don't see how precarious our future can be.

See, life on earth can be so good that we forget that it's going to end at some point. But the Apostle James points out the futility of this thinking. He says in James 5, or chapter 5, verse 1, he says, come now, you rich.

He's addressing the rich and all of us are thinking like, well, that's not me. I'm not rich. Well, most Americans, we live with more privilege and comfort as the rich did back then. So many of us, you know, we're doing good.

So let's say, come now, you rich. All right. Apostle James, I'm queuing in. I'm paying attention. Speak to me. What's next? Weep and howl.

[10 : 19] All right? Like Mary, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. See, the rich, we're going to have the same problem as the poor.

You know, the rich, we may not experience much misery in this life, but the question for us here that James is putting to us, what about the next life? What about the life after this life?

And the reality is for all of us, for all of us, what this is pointing to is without Jesus, you are as you and I are as hopeless in death as Mary is in life.

And that's one of our biggest problems is we don't think about that. We're too short-sighted. We live for today. We live for our life in this world.

And you know what? Anguish and suffering, like, that can blind us to our need for the resurrection, but so can the ambivalence brought on by the comforts and security of wealth.

[11 : 16] And the point is here is like all of us are blind, which is why we need help from the outside to see and believe in this resurrected Jesus. And I think what this passage points out is that you can't find Jesus, he finds you.

Like, look at this. Mary comes, right? She comes to the tomb. She sees an empty tomb. And it doesn't click in her mind at that point. Wait a second. Tomb empty?

Maybe Jesus is alive? No, she goes on weeping because she came to look for a dead body, not a risen Savior. And then she sees two men inside the tomb.

Like, we know they're angels because the account says, you know, they're angels sitting in the tomb, but she doesn't see two angels. She sees two men and then talks to them like two dudes hanging out in tombs at sunrise as normal, right?

Like, I'm like, Mary, I probably would have asked some, like, follow-up questions to, like, where's the body that was here? Like, two guys sitting in the tomb? I don't know. Maybe that's just me. Then she turns and she turns around and there's a man standing in front of her.

[12 : 24] She's looking right at Jesus and she doesn't know it's him. Jesus even speaks to her. She's still clueless. Here's the point. You and I, we can't just live off the facts of the resurrection.

And I'm not saying truth is irrelevant. But the resurrection can't just be a set of facts that you really agree upon. It has to be a revelation that hits your heart. God has to open your eyes to see it and believe it.

You have to have an encounter with the resurrected Jesus. And here's the thing. Revelation is something that happens to you. You can't manufacture it. You can't, like, behave your way into it.

It is God's grace towards us. And we don't have control about how and when it comes. Jesus, it's funny. It's not like Mary was, like, you know, just really slow to wake up to the idea that Jesus was resurrected.

Actually, all of the accounts of Jesus first appearing to his disciples went the same way. They didn't know it was him. Like, Jesus walked with guys down the road to Emmaus, which would have probably been multiple hours, walking with them, talking with them, teaching them, opening the scriptures to them, explaining how everything from in the Old Testament pointed to him.

[13 : 41] And they still didn't recognize him the whole time, right? It's not a Mary issue. It's an us issue. Our eyes are just blind to these things.

And I always ask God, like, God, why did you put these accounts in? You know, why did it happen this way? Why wasn't it just like, hey, Jesus rose, disciples believed, boom, let's move on. Let's get to the book of Acts. And they go out and, like, share the gospel with the world.

But God always has a purpose in everything he does. See, all these disciples, they spent three years with Jesus closely. That is a lot of time together. Still, they couldn't pick Jesus out of a lineup or know him by his voice.

The most qualified people failed to find the resurrected Jesus. Now, if they couldn't do it, what hope do you and I have? And that's the point.

That is the point. We can't on our own. Jesus has to come and open our eyes. We don't find Jesus. He finds us. And you know what?

[14 : 44] It's never at our best when he finds us, might I add. He finds us often at our most broken, at our most hurting, at our most needy. And he comes and he meets us there.

Jesus isn't the guy who comes to perfect people. He's the guy that comes to the broken. He's the guy that comes to the sinner. He's the guy that comes to the wailing person who's lost everything and has a dark future.

But he doesn't leave us there, guys. When our eyes are open, the effect it has is nothing short of miraculous.

When the resurrected Jesus becomes a revelation, it doesn't slightly change our lives. The resurrection brings you into a whole new life.

It brings us into a whole new way of living. So I love the progression in Jesus' encounter with Mary here. Before he reveals himself, he addresses her as woman, right?

[15 : 44] Very generic. Very impersonal. He is acting like a stranger to her just like she is doing to him. But then he says her name, Mary.

Man, I would have loved to have heard how that sounded. I would have loved to have been there. He doesn't say anything else to her, just her name. He doesn't say, Mary, it's me, Jesus.

It's me, Jesus. Just her name. That is it. You know, one of the sweetest sounds to our ears is our name being said with love. And when you're filled with compassion and love for people, it comes out in your voice.

It does. And our hearts, they're like God programmed. They have this like radar system to pick that up, right? We know. We know when our name is being said with compassion and love.

As loving, as compassionate as any of us could be, it really pales in comparison to Jesus' love and compassion for us. I mean, he oozes compassion and love.

[16 : 48] And that's what Mary heard when he called her name. Has that happened to you? Have you heard Jesus call your name like that?

Maybe you have. Maybe it's been a long time since he heard your name on your Savior's lips, hitting you in the heart, full of compassion and love.

That's what our soul longs for more than anything else, though. We want to hear our Father in heaven. We want to hear the King of the universe, the creator of all things, who made us, who knows us inside and out.

What our soul longs for, and we don't know it until it hits us, is him with so much love and compassion saying, Oh, Jesse. Oh, that's all I need.

Thank you. It's more precious than all the riches of life. It shines brighter than the darkness we're in. It comforts us despite what we're facing and how bleak our future might be.

[17 : 56] And just like Mary's weeping turns to joy, so does ours when the resurrected Jesus calls her name like that. But there's more to that.

I mean, that is the beginning of a new life in Jesus, but there's even more. Jesus is always full of surprises. I'm sure Mary at that point was like, Yes, Jesus, you're back. You're here to stay.

But he quickly points out that is not going to be the case, right? He says, Don't cling to me. I got to go back to my Father. Now you would think this would send Mary right back into her weeping and wailing, right?

Like he's gone, he's back, and then he's going again. Like, what the heck, Jesus? Come on. She's already been through so much. But this time she doesn't fall apart. At the realization that he is going away again, that she could be losing him again, she doesn't fall apart.

So why? Well, it means the revelation of the resurrection for Mary was complete. She knows she isn't losing Jesus ever again. He's beaten death, right?

[19 : 02] That means, like that's a one and done thing. You get victory over death, that means you're living forever. But she also understood what Jesus was talking about when he said, I'm going to the Father in heaven.

She understood all that that meant. So Jesus wasn't going to be there in the flesh anymore, but he was going to send his spirit, the Holy Spirit, to be with her, to be with all of his disciples, right?

Jesus wouldn't be there in the flesh, but his presence would be with us by his spirit. And that's the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. That's what we enjoy.

He gives us the full experience of Jesus without the body. But in addition to the gift of the Spirit, Jesus gives Mary another quite equally an incredible gift.

It says in verse 17, Jesus says to her, Go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

[20 : 01] Let me tell you what Mary heard. You thought you were back to being alone without family. You were in despair because no one was going to be with you to care for you, sustain you, and protect you.

But here Jesus calls the disciples brothers. He tells her that his Father in heaven is now her Father too. Family language. Mary was just adopted into a new forever family.

A family that supersedes all other bloodlines. And this new life of the resurrection, it just keeps resetting new boundaries in our lives. That's what it does. Church family, what do we do?

Man, we watch out for each other. We care for each other, right? We care for each other's burdens physically and spiritually as well. We want to make sure we're okay and we're growing and we're strong in the Lord.

You and I, we need brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to be connected with them. And guess what? They need you too. But the boundaries we are called to are even beyond the borders of the church too.

[21 : 11] Jesus calls us to take this message of the resurrection to those who don't know about it yet. And he said, go tell the brothers, go tell the disciples what's happened.

He tells to Mary. And obedience, that's what Mary does. You know, she's like the apostle to the apostle. She is the messenger of the good news of Jesus to his disciples who haven't seen the Lord, but she goes and she says, I have seen the Lord.

Our Jesus, our Savior, who we thought was dead, he is alive, he has been resurrected, he has defeated death. And that is part of our new life in Jesus, to go and to declare to the world, I have seen the Lord.

That is what the resurrection means. As the band comes up, let's respond. And I actually just want to respond in prayer. So if we could just close our eyes.

And as I pray, man, if I'm praying and this is hitting you, just say yes and amen, this is me. And respond to how God is directing you.

[22 : 29] So Jesus, we are so thankful. We are so thankful for the meaning of your resurrection and all that it has restored in our lives.

We thank you for the fact that you are with us and you're going to be with us until the end. And we thank you that you've restored our fortunes. We thank you that our hope in life and in death is you, not anything else, you.

I want to pray for those who may be here, but don't yet believe. I pray, Jesus, you would call them by name, like only you can. Open their eyes to see that the resurrection is true, that you are real and alive.

I pray for those of us who are here and do believe and help us live in the revelation of the resurrection. And you know what? Man, we need you to call our name too.

We need to be reminded of how much you love us and care for us. And I pray for those, maybe it's been a long time for some here, I pray that you would do that. Even as we are going to respond in singing and taking communion here, I pray that you would do that.

[23 : 55] And help us, Lord, also to be so filled with the excitement that you are alive, that we want to take that news to the world. To let those who don't know, to give them that good news.

I pray that in your name, amen. What we're going to do right now and I'm going to lead us in is communion. And this is what we do as Christians, as believers.

It's a big part. It's a gift given to us by Jesus to remember that, you know, before his resurrection, he suffered and died.

He suffered and died for us. And there's this little wafer here that represents bread that points to his body that was broken for us.

Jesus said, hey, I went to the cross. my body was broken for your sake so that you could be in my family. So that I could call you brother and sister.

[25 : 03] So that you get to call my father, your father. And this is what it took. It took a broken body and shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

And so together, man, let's thank God and eat the body and the blood together. Amen. Amen. Amen.