

I HAVE SEEN THE RISEN LORD

(Mary, Why Are You Weeping?)

John 20: 11-18 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

On March 28, 1535, Martin Luther preached on this text. His message title was: “The Resurrection of our Lord.” His message was translated into English from German by Frederick J. Gaiser. What captivated me his beginning words. He said, “I have been a preacher over twenty years, and have never missed an Easter—though this may be my last time to preach an Easter sermon.” Martin Luther had an awareness that death for him was near. Born on November 10, 1483, he lived 11 more years and he died at age 62, on February 18, 1546. What captivated my heart resonating in my soul, was the thrill and thanksgiving to God that God has given me in these 54 years of pastoral ministry, over 50 times to preach on Resurrection Sunday. It is a special blessing from God that I do not take lightly, for preaching on Christ’s resurrection is the crowning message for our souls.

The apostle Paul preached on the resurrection of our Lord in I Corinthians 15: 3-4, saying, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures.” We come today to Mary Magdalene’s personal encounter with the risen Lord. It was a day of deep grieving for all Jesus’ followers. The men returning that day from Jerusalem to Emmaus said it best, “We were hoping that Jesus was the One to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24: 21) Hopes were dashed, engulfed with gloom. The disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. Peter was wrestling with his denying the Lord. All the disciples abandoned Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and fleeing in fear. Our resurrection message today focuses in on the grief and despair in the tears of Mary Magdalene. The Greek word for weeping is **klaio**. It means to sob loudly, and to wail in loud expressions of grief, mourning someone who has died. The Greek word for shedding tears quietly is **dakruo**. We don’t often see people sob loudly, and wail, but Mary was sobbing loudly. Just three days before, after Peter denied his Lord, he went out, Mark 14: 72, tells us, and he broke down and wept bitterly—**klaio**. Peter was loudly wailing and sobbing. In Mark 16: 10, when Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples the stone was rolled away from the tomb and the body of Jesus was gone, she found them mourning and weeping.

Sometimes we doctor up and repaint the biblical picture our way, as tears were flowing. Let the Bible speak. Both the men and women who followed Jesus, after His crucifixion, were sobbing, wailing, and loudly mourning. Mark 16: 10 used another word, mourning. The Greek word is **pentheo**, which means passionate lamenting that cannot be hidden. Don’t miss the emotions of resurrection morning. Jesus’ followers were weeping, sobbing, wailing, and passionately lamenting in ways that could not be hidden. I struggled for hours this week, to seek God’s mind on how to preach this message. God reminded me, Mary Magdalene is not the center of this message. The risen Christ is the center in this personal encounter with Mary Magdalene. Let’s follow our text and uncover together, seven brief realizations we all need to know on this Easter morning.

JESUS KNOWS WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE HAVE BEEN. (I.) Look at John 20: 11. “But Mary (and we know from verse 18 it is Mary Magdalene) stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.” Jesus knows the miracles that He has already done in us, and He knows the miracles, yet He plans to do in our lives. A personal encounter with the risen Lord will always be a power encounter. It’s an amazing truth for us all to know that Jesus after He arose, was out and about among His followers, ministering to them where they were at, coming individually, and coming to groups, but always drawing us closer to Himself, and speaking the truth to each person in love. Though Jesus knows who we are and where we’ve been and where we are at today, He doesn’t plan to leave us where we are grieving, traumatized, or overwhelmed in our pain. As we look at our text, notice that the Mary that John is speaking of, is Mary Magdalene. Magdalene is not this Mary’s last name, but it is the town not far from Capernaum, the village of Magdala, a place I have been in Israel. In the New Testament, we find Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and Mary, the mother of James. In Luke 8: 1-3, we find out that Mary Magdalene was one of the financial supporters of Jesus and the disciples. Listen!

We read, “Jesus went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.” When Mary Magdalene met Jesus, she was desperate as she was controlled by seven demons, and Jesus set her free. Mary Magdalene, with all these other women traveled the roads of Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Decapolis, and Perea, making the meals and funding the three-year ministry of Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, after the centurion said, “Truly, this was the Son of God!”—then Matthew 27:55 reported, “There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and mother of the sons of Zebedee—James and John—Salome.” That day as Jesus died on the cross for us all, He knew about all His followers. He also knew about all of us, about you, who you are, where you have been. Secondly,

JESUS UNDERSTANDS HOW GRIEF CAN MIX-UP OUR THINKING. (II.)

Notice John 20:12-13. “And Mary 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.” We need to back up a moment and take time to harmonize the Gospel account in John with Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So far, what happened before Jesus’ encounter with Mary Magdalene? John 20:1 states, “Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.” Matthew adds that the other Mary was with Mary Magdalene—Mt. 28: 1. Mark adds that Salome, the mother of James and John was with the two Mary’s. Luke suggests that there were more women. Luke 23: 55-56 tells us, “The women who

had come with Jesus from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. Then Luke 24: 1, states, “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they (speaking of these followers of Jesus) went to the tomb, taking the spices, they had prepared.” There were at least 3 women, but maybe more than a dozen of them. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but Luke 24: 2 states, “But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” John 20: 2 fills in the story saying, “So Mary Magdalene ran and went to Simon Peter and John, the other disciple, saying, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

While Mary was gone from the tomb where she saw Jesus was gone from there, Mark 16: 5-8 adds, “They, that’s the rest of the women hoping to anoint Jesus’ dead body, entered the tomb, where they saw a young man sitting at the right side, dressed in a white robe (it was an angel) and they, the women were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” As these women fled from the tomb, we read in Matthew 28: 9, “And behold, Jesus met them, and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him.” Now as the other women ran to tell the disciples they had seen the Lord, we have harmonized the story, to find Mary Magdalene outside the tomb.

Earlier that morning, Mary Magdalene, saw the empty tomb and ran to tell Peter and John. Now, unaware of Jesus meeting the other women, Mary Magdalene stood at the tomb weeping and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. Get this picture clearly. Mary came back, and her grief had risen at the thought that Jesus’ body was stolen away. When grief is strong and as wild as grief can get, we can get mixed up and do unconventional things. The other women had been alarmed to see one of the two angels, but Mary sees two angels who asked 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.” Mary Magdalene was talking with the angels because her grief had erased even the fear of angels. Is that normal, to converse with angels and not be afraid, like the other women were? No, it was a mixed-up Mary Magdalene that morning that was grieving the loss of Jesus, but can’t you hear the anger in her voice? She said, “They have taken away my Lord.” Oh, how much Jesus’ loved His followers! Do we love Jesus as Mary did? Mary was mixed up, still sticking to her earlier impression that the body of Jesus was stolen, forgetting Jesus’ teaching that He would rise again. Maybe you are here this morning, and the resurrection story is mixed up in your mind. Maybe, you are facing much grief in your life over a terrible trauma so that you aren’t even tracking with this message. Beloved, Jesus understands how grief can mix up our thinking. Oh, how He still loves us! Thirdly,

JESUS IS THERE FOR US EVEN WHEN WE ARE NOT AWARE OF IT.

(III.) Notice John 20: 14. “Having said this, Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.” What was the matter? Mary was bent on finding the body of Jesus. But why did she quit talking to the angels and turn around. Did she sense another person’s presence? Did those two angels sitting at the head and the foot of the sepulcher, where Jesus’ body had been laid, did they see Jesus appear behind Mary? Did they stand to their feet, recognizing the presence of the Lord? Why didn’t Mary recognize the One she was earnestly searching for? Did Jesus deliberately conceal Himself from Mary, as He did later that day when He walked with the two disciples, home seven miles, from Jerusalem to Emmaus? (Luke 24: 13-32) It was still early, and maybe it was still somewhat dark in this part of the garden. Maybe, Mary’s eyes were blinded by her tears. Listen this morning. It’s not our awareness of God that proves He is there. It’s not whether we can see Him or feel Him. He’s there for us. The risen Lord made a promise when He gave His disciples the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 20, He said, “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Paul, the last apostle to see the risen Christ, told us in Romans 8: 38-39, “For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels or rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” Hebrews 13: 5, is powerful, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Jesus doesn’t just come to where we are, or where we are grieving. No, whether we know it or not, He is there. He weeps when He sees our despair, and when some of you may have even considered ending your life. He sees it all and weeps with you. Fourthly,

JESUS FEELS OUR DEEP TRAUMAS AND HE KNOWS US BY NAME.

(IV.) Notice John 20: 15-16, “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, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).” Sorrows are turned to hope when we seek the Savior. Mary Magdalene had come back to the tomb, and she remained by the tomb, weeping. She wanted to find Jesus, although at this point, she was just trying to find His corpse. In her thinking, someone had added insult to injury by robbing the grave. This trauma was too much. Jesus had asked the angry mob coming to arrest Him in Gethsemane the same question, “Whom are you seeking?” Jesus knew all about Mary’s confused mind, her trauma, and her brokenness. Jesus never rebuked Mary. He revealed Himself to her. How? He spoke her name. The fact that the Lord revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene shines a ray of hope for every person here today, who is struggling with sin and guilt. If the Savior rescued this demon-possessed woman from her life of sin and chose her to be one of the first witnesses to His resurrection, then He can save you and me, from our sin and use us to serve Him! Ladies, this morning, know this—Jesus started off resurrection morning appearing to His women followers first. Jesus could see Mary was hopeless without Him—and so am I, and so are you. Let Jesus reveal Himself to you this morning. Jesus knows your pain. He’s calling your name. Fifthly,

JESUS STOPS OUR FEARFUL CLINGING, AFRAID OF LOSING HIM.

(V.) We read in John 20: 17, “Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father...” Mary had lost Jesus once, never again! Now Mary held on to Jesus for dear life. Jesus had a mission to go before His Father to present Himself, with His wounded hands, and feet, and side to the Father. It was as if Jesus was saying to Mary Magdalene, “You don’t have to cling to me, and keep holding on to my garments.” Jesus was saying, “You don’t have to hang on to me as if I were about to disappear permanently. This is a time for joy and sharing the good news, not for clinging to me, as if I could ever be anyone’s jealously guarded secret. Jesus could not remain on earth as prior to Calvary. As He promised, He would soon ascend to His Father, and be seated at His right hand, but soon He would send His Comforter, the Holy Spirit to indwell us all. Sixthly,

JESUS SHOWS US THAT HIS GOD AND FATHER ARE OURS AS WELL.

(VI.) Jesus told Mary in John 20: 17, “But go to My brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” The risen Lord opened-up a brand-new relationship with all of us that I love. When He said, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, making us brothers and sisters with God as our Father too. Jesus earlier called us His servants, friends in John 15:15. but this new name seems more intimate than friends. We have the same Father. Jesus says, “My Father,” for His relationship with God as Son is by nature. We are sons and daughters by adoption. But don’t miss this message Mary Magdalene got to be the first to share with the disciples. The same God who is the Father of Jesus, is also the Father of all His disciples, all those born-again, and that makes every one of us as born-again believers, brothers and sisters with Abba, Father as our very own Father. What tender mercy from Jesus He is willing to call us His own brothers and sisters. All because He died, was buried, and rose again. Seventhly,

JESUS SENDS US TO TELL HIS GRIEVING FOLLOWERS HE’S ALIVE.

(VII.) John 20: 18 tells us the Easter message Mary Magdalene now went to tell. “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”— and that He had said these things to her. Beloved, a true Christian is one who can say, “I have seen the Lord!” Christianity doesn’t mean knowing about Jesus. It is knowing Jesus, having a personal encounter, and a personal relationship with Him. What a change on Easter morning for Mary Magdalene. One moment she was sobbing, wailing, lamenting, mourning, and convulsing with tears, and now, when Jesus spoke her name out loud, everything was changed. The morning search for a dead corpse was over. Mary met the living, risen Lord. She was a changed Mary. I want to close by quoting John Finch’s 2016 song. “I have seen the Lord!” “Early in the morning as I journeyed to the tomb, there was nowhere else to go, with eyes full of tears, When He spoke my name, we were standing face to face. I have seen the Lord. I have seen the Lord. He’s no longer dead, He is risen! I have seen the Lord. I have seen the Lord. He’s no longer dead, He is risen! For many days I’ve followed. These eyes have seen Him die, and these eyes have seen Him rise. He cast away my sin by the saving grace of God. It is Christ who changed my life. I have seen, my eyes have seen the glory of our God.” The world hopes for the best, but the Lord offers the best hope. Christ is risen! I have seen the Lord! Amen.