

*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. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one who Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stopping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen clothes lying there, and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in and saw and believed; For as yet, they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their own homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped inside 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 my Lord, and I don't 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, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My 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.*

#### **John 20:1-18**

#### **"My Father and your Father"**

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The story of the resurrection never fails to amaze me. Here once again we have the event of human history, and the first witness on the scene is Mary Magdalene, someone who in those days could not even testify in court. The is the woman "*out of whom had come seven demons*," Luke tells us in chapter 8 of his gospel. I want to take a brief moment to talk about Mary's. To be honest, prior to preparing these messages, I had never really given them their due. I had conflated and confused which Mary was which.

Last time I was up here, I had the privilege of talking about Mary of Bethany, sister to Lazarus and Martha. Over the last few weeks we've heard Pastor speak on John's account of the crucifixion, and in John's gospel we have Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mary's sister who is unnamed, Mary, wife of Clopas, and yet another Mary present at the crucifixion... Mary Magdalene.

She was Mary from Magdala, which is a city on the Sea of Galilee. I had thought she was a repentant prostitute, but I couldn't find any Scripture to actually back that up. I did find an article at [christianity.com](http://christianity.com) which said that: "In the 6<sup>th</sup> century Pope Gregory the Great authoritatively pronounced that the sinful woman mentioned in Luke 7:36-50 was the same person as Mary Magdalene. He even asserted that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany were the same person." That article made reference to an interesting paper found on Baylor.edu that laid out all of the speculation about her, a lot of theories and ideas which I hadn't heard.

Bottom line, these ladies rate more than just a passing thought. John offers us Mary Magdalene as the first witness to actually see Jesus after the Resurrection. "*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark*". In other words, you want to be the first to witness Jesus? Don't press the snooze button. And Mary did what's right. She got up and got going. But what did she expect to find? She was most assuredly not expecting a resurrection.

One of the guys I listen to, I think it was McGee, said "You don't go to the graveyard in search of the living!" and in verse two of our passage, Mary says nothing about Jesus being alive when she reports to the men that the tomb is empty. Rather, she says: "*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.*" Mary's statement clarifies a few things for us. First of all, Mary says "we". This brings us in line with the other gospels which indicate that several women were in on this pre dawn field trip. Secondly, and more importantly, Mary's words reveal what she was looking for. "*We don't know where they have laid him.*"

She was looking for a corpse. Myself, I'm trying to think of just how many times I've been fired up to be somewhere and do something for the Lord. Up before light. Ready to go. Expecting one thing, and at the end of the day, well, winding up somewhere completely different, doing something I hadn't expected. I'd have to say it's happened more times than I can count. In fact, I'd have say that, when God is in play, unexpected outcomes are the rule, and not the exception. Mary had come there to grieve for her Lord and to care for his body, and not to find him where she left him was a heartbreaking shock at first.

So after Mary tells Peter and John these things, they get their moment to shine. They, however, were not expecting a resurrection either. Straight to the tomb. John gets there first, but he waits for Peter who alone is bold enough to barge right into the tomb. And after searching and verifying Mary's strange report, verse 10 tells us that: *"Then the disciples went back to their homes."* It is a strangely passive, unconcerned reaction to an entirely unexpected set of facts. The men go home and wait for more news!

But not Mary. This is the second piece of the puzzle here. She's persistent. She's not going anywhere till she finds out what happened to the body of the Savior she loved. And that persistence pays off. Not only does she get to speak with a pair of angels, but she gets to speak with Jesus. After being dazzled by the angels sitting in the place where Mary last saw Jesus laid, she turns around to find herself face to face with a man she doesn't recognize, who turns out to be Jesus. And John tells us that: *"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.'"* Amazing. Jesus asked her the same question he asked the Roman soldiers who came to arrest him in the garden. *"Whom do you seek?"*

And there was Mary staring Jesus in the face and yet she did not recognize him. Not until he said her name. *"Jesus said to her, 'Mary!'"* I've found myself pausing and smiling when I hear that verse. My mind jumped immediately to *"My sheep hear my voice."* Right? All throughout John, chapter 10, *"My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me....I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me...The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."*

The point being that Mary, and you and me too, will struggle to recognize and love and follow Jesus until he opens our eyes and ears and hearts. When he calls her by name, then Mary responds with wholehearted relief and joy. She must have embraced him because the next thing Jesus tells her to do is to stop: *"Don't 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.'"*

Why would Jesus forbid her from embracing him? Touching Him? Matthew's resurrection account says that some number of women *"came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him."* John Calvin says about Jesus and the women: "...he unquestionably did not forbid them to touch him, but, perceiving that their attention was too much occupied with embracing his feet, he restrained and corrected that immoderate zeal. They fixed their attention on his bodily presence, and did not understand any other way of enjoying his society than by conversing with him on the earth. We ought, therefore, to conclude, that they were not forbidden to touch him, until Christ saw that, by their foolish and unreasonable desire, they wished to keep him in the world." And that mental picture, the picture of the 3 year old wrapped around the legs of a mom or dad trying to leave for work.

So what is it that I hope you take out of this today? Mathew Henry had a pair of quotes that I think sums this up nicely. First "We are likely to seek and to find, when we seek with affection, and seek in tears." It was not wrong, not out of place for the disciples of Jesus, men and women alike, to long for Jesus' company and to mourn for his loss. And secondly, "Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations." Jesus is often not who we imagine him to be, and we need to be ready and willing to bend to what he shows us when we go looking for him.