

“I Have Seen the Lord!”

John 20.11-18

Series: Holy Week

April 17, 2022

Easter Morning

I. When Confusion Reigns

- A. Surely one of most poignant scenes in all of scripture is the one recorded of the encounter of Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus
- B. **John 20:11–15** (ESV) —
 - 1. 11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.
 - 2. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.
 - 3. 13 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.”
 - 4. 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.
 - 5. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”
 - 6. 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.”
- C. Grief does strange things to people
 - 1. Most of you understand that implicitly
 - a. We live in a community where grief and loss are common
 - b. In our demographic we lose our loved ones with regularity
 - c. And you all know how we are affected
 - d. How loss radically changes our perspective
 - e. How grief sows confusion and disorientation
- D. Confusion and disorientation drive the experience of Mary on this remarkable morning
 - 1. But to understand it, we need to back up and remember
 - a. Remember what we reminded ourselves of back on Friday
 - b. Remember, not just what happened to Mary in these last three days
 - c. But what happened to all the disciples
- E. **And Faith Dies**
 - 1. When Jesus died on the cross, there is a sense in which the disciples died too.
 - 2. Remember, they had followed Jesus for the better part of three years
 - a. They had seen His miracles, His signs
 - b. They had listened to His teaching
 - 3. Now they did not understand much of His teaching
 - a. But what they did understand, they believed

- b. After all, they had left their livelihoods, lock, stock and barrel, and followed Jesus
 - 4. But now that Jesus had been executed, life as they knew it was over
 - a. They scattered – no longer engaged on mission
 - b. The mission was over
 - 5. They started to go back to where they had come from before they knew Jesus
 - a. The women returned to their homes
 - b. The Galileans would return to Galilee – and did even after the resurrection
 - c. They would try to reconstitute some semblance of normalcy following the tragic and devastating loss of the One on whom they had staked everything
 - 6. They had once given great testimonies of faith
 - a. Peter spoke for all of them when he said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” ([Matthew 16.16](#))
 - b. They said, “We believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God” ([John 6.69](#))
 - 7. But now those confessions were past tense
 - a. They once believed; but not now
 - b. Faith had died
- F. Example
 - 1. Thomas
 - a. Call him doubting Thomas
 - b. We say he was from Missouri
 - c. Missouri: the Show Me state
 - d. “Prove it to me” they say in Missou
 - 2. But after the crucifixion Thomas was no doubter
 - a. He was an outright unbeliever
 - b. [John 20:24–25](#) (ESV) — 24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”
 - 3. Alexander Maclaren: Flat, frank, dogged disbelief, not hesitation or doubt, was his attitude. The very form in which he puts his requirement shows how he was hugging his unbelief, and how he had no idea that what he asked would ever be granted. ‘Unless I have so-and-so I will not,’ indicates an altogether different spiritual attitude from what ‘If I have so-and-so, I will,’ would have indicated. The one is the language of willingness to be persuaded, the other is a token of a determination to be obstinate.
 - 4. Before the disciples actually encountered Jesus following the resurrection, I believe that was their attitude as well

5. Christ had died
 - a. And with Him, so had their faith
 - b. All of them
 - c. The disciples
 - d. The women
 - e. Mary Magdalene
 - G. **And Hope Died** as well
 1. Faith and hope – they go together
 - a. They believed in Jesus
 - b. And in their belief, they were confident that Jesus would bring the kingdom of God into existence
 2. But now, their hopes, along with their faith, were shattered
 - a. Hope had died
 - H. Example – disciples on the Road to Emmaus
 1. They, like the other disciples, were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah
 - a. That He was about to engage in His Messianic reign on earth
 - b. They had followed Him, expecting to have a place in the kingdom
 2. But now Jesus had died
 3. And when they headed back home to Emmaus, and even when Jesus approached them and walked with them, they didn't even recognize Him
 4. **Luke 24:17–21** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad.
 - b. 18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”
 - c. 19 And he said to them, “What things?”
 - d. And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.
 - e. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.
 - I. They had hoped!
 1. And their hopes were dashed
 - J. Jesus died
 1. And with Him
 - a. Faith died
 - b. And hope died
- II. **Surviving by Love**
- A. And yet, Mary Magdalene shows up
 1. Why?
 - a. Her faith is shattered

- b. Here hope is gone
 - 2. What sustains her?
- B. There is only one thing left
 - 1. And I think we can all identify with it
 - 2. It's love
 - 3. In spite of this dark tragedy
 - a. In spite of this devastating loss
 - 4. She loved Jesus
 - a. Her encounters with Jesus had left deep impression on her
 - b. Her life was transformed by Jesus
- C. We don't know a lot about Mary Magdalene
 - 1. Tradition has embellished her life and personal history to be sure
 - 2. The one thing we know about her is that Jesus had freed her from demon possession
 - a. He had cast seven demons out of her
 - 3. A woman, gripped by the demonic
 - a. Through whatever avenue of sin she had pursued to open the door to Satan
 - b. She was captive to wickedness
 - 4. But Jesus had freed her
 - a. She would never be the same
 - 5. No matter what happened to Jesus
 - a. She would always love him
- D. She would love Him in spite of the experience of the last three days
 - 1. She was with the women who were witnesses of Jesus' humiliation
 - a. She watched all day as the crucifixion drained the life out of Him
 - 2. She saw the Jewish leaders and the crowds shouting "Crucify Him!"
 - 3. She saw the judgment of Pilate that sent Him to Calvary
 - a. She followed the procession to Golgotha
 - b. She saw Jesus collapse under the weight of the cross He carried to the place of execution
 - c. And how Simon of Cyrene had to help Him bear its burden
 - 4. She saw the driving of the nails into His hands and feet
 - a. She heard Him cry out "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
 - 5. She experienced the darkness
 - a. The earthquake
 - 6. She saw Him expire – take His last breath
- E. I don't think all men of the disciples were able to stomach all of that
 - 1. But Mary did
 - 2. Why?
 - a. Because she loved Jesus
- F. Her love for Jesus drove her to want to do something for Him – even in His death
 - 1. I know you understand this
 - a. That's one of the things memorial services are for

- b. Time to express our love for those we lose
 - c. You understand this
 - 2. I know many of you, surely out of humility, don't want a memorial service
 - a. Please reconsider that
 - b. Don't deny the opportunity for your friends to express their love for you
 - c. They need to do that
 - 3. Mary had to do something for Jesus
- G. She, along with the other women, used their own resources, and bought spices to care for the body of Jesus
 - 1. And they had planned to bring them to the tomb the morning after the Sabbath
 - 2. And yet, in their grief, they weren't thinking clearly
 - 3. They carried all this stuff, and then it occurred to them, who's going to move the stone?
- H. They get to the tomb and they notice – the stone had already been moved
 - 1. They hadn't expected that
 - a. But that's fine – suits their purposes
 - 2. When they see that, they decide that the disciples should be told
 - a. So Mary Magdalene is dispatched to tell Peter
 - b. Off she goes, leaving the other women at the tomb
- I. While she's gone, the women look into the tomb and have their encounter with the angels
 - 1. Who tell them "He is not here. He is risen, just as He said" (**Matthew 28.6**)
 - 2. They rush off to tell this news to the disciples
- J. In the meantime, Mary had told Peter and John
 - 1. They run to the tomb
 - a. Leaving Mary in the dust
 - b. Gentlemen that they are!
- K. So Mary, left behind
 - 1. Confused
 - a. Distraught
 - b. Disoriented
 - 2. Starts back to the tomb
- L. When she gets back to the tomb – the second time
 - 1. Peter and John have already come and gone
 - 2. So Mary is alone
 - a. The women have left
 - b. Peter and John have gone
 - c. She had hoped to care for the body of Jesus
 - d. And there's no body to care for
 - 3. She has spent three days weeping
 - a. It's amazing that she has any more tears to shed
 - b. But she does
 - c. Because of her love for Jesus

- M. The angels said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”
 - 1. She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” (John 20.13)
- N. Then Jesus shows up
 - 1. John 20:14 (ESV) — 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.
 - 2. John 20:15 (ESV) — 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”
 - 3. 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.”
- O. In the midst of her grief, confusion, disorientation
 - 1. Comes Jesus
 - 2. But she doesn’t recognize Him
 - 3. You see what you expect to see
 - a. Jesus is dead
 - b. If she expects to see Jesus, she expects to see a body
 - 4. So she assumes He’s the gardener
 - a. Perhaps she doesn’t recognize him because His appearance has changed
 - b. He now is resurrected – has a new spiritual body
 - c. The Emmaus disciples, recall, didn’t recognize Jesus either
 - d. Or maybe she doesn’t see clearly
 - e. Tears do that to you
- P. But Jesus is alive!
 - 1. He has risen!
- Q. So what does that mean?

III. New Encounter

- A. John 20:16 (ESV) —
 - 1. 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.”
 - 2. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).
- B. So now the One she supposes to be the gardener speaks to her
 - 1. Just as He did a moment ago
 - a. And she didn’t recognize Him
 - b. She had turned back toward the tomb to find some other explanation to these confusing events
- C. But now He uses her name
 - 1. “Mary”
 - 2. And she turns back to Him – and faces Him
 - a. “Rabboni” – teacher or master
- D. She had no interest in a gardener
 - 1. But when He uttered her name – something radically changed
 - 2. Just as Jesus taught – as the sheep know the voice of their shepherd when

- He calls them by name
 - a. She knew the voice of her Shepherd
 - b. And has a new encounter with Him
 - c. A radically transforming encounter
 - d. A joyful encounter
- E. Jesus had been raised from the dead
 - 1. And so has Mary's faith!
 - 2. Mary's faith goes from death to life in that very encounter
- F. Maybe you don't know what to make of this Jesus
 - 1. Maybe you can't bring yourself to believe in Jesus
 - a. Maybe you have no faith
 - b. Maybe you have lost the faith of your childhood
 - c. Maybe some difficult engagement with the church has robbed you of faith
 - 2. Maybe you are bereft of hope
 - a. Without faith, there can be no hope
- G. Why don't you start where Mary started?
 - 1. Why don't you start with love?
 - 2. Why don't you start by realizing what Jesus has done for you
 - a. How He lived a life that you and I could never live
 - b. How He suffered and died on the cross, taking upon Himself the just punishment for our sins
 - 3. And consider how He comes to you as He came to Mary
 - a. And calls her name: "Mary"
 - 4. And consider how He calls your name
 - a. Joe
 - b. Dorothy
 - c. Bill
 - d. Samantha
 - e. Don
 - f. Marylou
 - g. Whoever
- H. Will you not respond as Mary responded?
 - 1. Perhaps then you will once again find faith
 - a. And rekindle hope
 - 2. Because of a new encounter with Jesus

IV. **New Relationships**

- A. And then you will experience new relationships
- B. **John 20:17** (ESV) —
 - 1. 17 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.' "
- C. Jesus is risen!
 - 1. He has risen indeed!

2. And because He has risen, so is our faith
3. And that leads us into new relationships
- D. You become the brothers and sisters of Jesus
 1. You belong to the family of God because of the resurrection of Christ
 2. God becomes your Father just as God is Jesus' Father
 3. God becomes your God
 - a. Whatever else you have placed on the pinnacle of your value system
 - b. Whatever else you have elevated to number one in your life
 - c. Your idol, your God
 - d. That idol is now cast aside
 - e. God becomes your God
 4. By the way, everybody is religious
 - a. Everybody believes in god
 - b. A god of some kind; an idol of some kind
 - c. Materialism
 - d. Power
 - e. Influence
 - f. Reputation
 - g. Self
 5. But when the love of Jesus, the risen Jesus, is encountered
 - a. You experience new relationships
 - b. With God the Father
 - c. With Jesus
 - d. And with your brothers and sisters in Christ

V. **New News**

- A. Finally, something else new happens
 1. You can't wait to tell the new news
- B. Seems like something out of the department of redundancy department
 1. Isn't news supposed to be new?
 2. You all know that's not the case these days
 - a. Breaking news! That's what we hear
 - b. Then we find out we've already heard it before
 - c. Or it's a rehash of something that we've heard before
 3. Or as someone said, new news is just old news happening to new people
- C. But once we have an encounter with the risen Christ, we really do have new news to tell
 1. And that's what happens to Mary
- D. **John 20:18** (ESV) —
 1. 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.
- E. She can't wait to tell of her encounter with the risen Lord
- F. Why is this news, not only new, but the best possible news?
 1. **It's true!**

- a. There is virtually no event more well attested than the evidence for the resurrection
 - b. Many books have been written about the evidence for the resurrection – many of them by lawyers
 - c. Some of them who set out to disprove the resurrection
 - d. Edward Clark (English jurist): As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the first Easter day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling... As a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of men to facts that they were able to substantiate.
2. **It comes after an apparent defeat**
- a. Remember the discouragement and disorientation of the disciples
 - b. How their faith and their hope was destroyed
 - c. But in an astonishing reversal, the resurrection of Jesus Christ transformed the defeated into the victors who would change the world – the Roman world in one generation!
3. **It proves the truth of Christianity**
- a. It proves who God is – His sovereignty and love
 - b. It proves who Jesus is – the eternally begotten Son of God
 - c. It proves our salvation – Jesus was “raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4.25)
4. **It provides power for holy living**
- a. Romans 6:4 (ESV) — 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
- G. There is not better news
- 1. Mary knows it
 - a. And she can’t wait to tell it to others
- H. Conclusion
- 1. How about you?
 - 2. Have you experience a new encounter with the risen Lord?
 - 3. Have you experienced new relationships with God through Jesus, and with His children – your brothers and sisters in His family?
 - 4. And do you consider the news of the resurrection to be the best possible news to deliver?