

# Mary Meets the Risen Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn again to the chapter we read, John's Gospel, chapter 20.

And just that well-known section there from verse 11. I'm not going to read it all again, but that section from verse 11 to verse 18.

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 there 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? And so on. I think this scene that we have here of Mary weeping at the tomb, and all that takes place before, during, and after is probably one of the most powerful and moving scenes in the Bible.

We find that there is heartbroken grief and anguish, and that it all changes so suddenly, just by a word. One word spoken changes the whole picture.

[ 1 : 15 ] And it's one of these moments where we find that anguish very quickly gives way to joy, where brokenness gives way to sheer euphoria.

And you know, in a sense, that is such a Christian experience, because it is, though there are different degrees and different levels, it is always true, when a soul comes out of darkness into light. That there is this, when there is the realization of where you are, this realization of who you have, this realization of peace with God.

You cannot put into words how you feel. You cannot describe the sense of relief, the sense of peace, the sense of joy.

There are some things that are beyond description. And this certainly is one of them. Because it's very difficult to try and explain to somebody, what is it?

[ 2 : 23 ] What do you have? What has happened? What do you have that you didn't have before? And it can, to a certain extent, there are different aspects of the Lord's work that might be more noticeable to you at the beginning than others.

And I'm not talking here necessarily of some people, when they come to faith, have a great assurance of faith right away. Other people, it's a long journey. It seems to be like a long process. And might have great difficulty in working out and being able to pinpoint exactly at what point they received or became aware of that liberty and freedom in Christ.

Some people, might be some here tonight, and you're on a long journey. And you're coming and you're going, and you're coming and you're going, and you're just not sure. But you know, when you do come to that place where you know that Jesus is your Lord and your Savior, you can't put a price on what you have, and you can't really describe to anybody what you have.

For some people, it would be a great sense of peace that all the previous struggles have gone, where there's a sense of just the uncertainty of life, of what happens if I die, a sense maybe of lostness, a sense of a lack of purpose in life, where things are just not coming together.

[ 3 : 48 ] There's all kinds of things. And then when you're, it's like where it all comes together. The sense of peace, the sense of belonging, the sense of identity, the sense of God's love for you.

There are so many different things that come, and sometimes one comes more than another at different times. So, in a sense, what we have here is a picture, of course, of what happens when a person comes to faith, where the darkness gives way to light, where the deadness gives way to life, all these things.

And, of course, it will be the ultimate picture of when a soul arrives in glory, when a person leaves this world and goes forever into the presence of the Lord. That will be the ultimate movement movement from, well, I'm not saying from darkness, but from all the brokenness and the sorrows of this world into the immediate presence of the Lord.

Now, in this particular chapter, we have, again, huge emphasis on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we know that that is such a key part of the Christian faith.

Remember how Paul in Corinthians says very clearly to us, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, you are yet in your sins. So, we know that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is integral to our salvation and to where we are today.

[ 5 : 21 ] But, here in this particular chapter, there is huge focus on this woman, Mary Magdalene. And rightly so. Because here is a woman who almost stands out along with another Mary, like Mary of Bethany.

Mary Magdalene didn't have the understanding, the spiritual enlightenment, the spiritual knowledge that Mary of Bethany had, that Mary, Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Because, you remember, it's been mentioned so often before, but Mary, in Bethany, anointed Jesus before his death. And Jesus said that it was in light of his death that she had done that.

Mary understood what even Peter, James, John, and the other disciples hadn't properly grasped.

Mary Magdalene, while she has incredible devotion and commitment and love to Jesus, didn't have the understanding and the knowledge and the awareness or the discernment that the other Mary had.

Because this Mary hasn't grasped something of the significance of Jesus' mission. but the thing about Mary, this Mary Magdalene, is her commitment and her love, her devotion to Jesus is quite extraordinary.

[ 6 : 53 ] You can see, she was a woman, she couldn't wait for the darkness to fade in order for the day to break so that she could get to the tomb. She was like just bursting to get to the tomb because she wanted to give this like final embalming to put the spices upon the body of Jesus.

To do like the last act of devotion and love to this Jesus who she loved with all her heart. Because you remember Mary Magdalene was a woman who had been completely lost.

A woman who believed had even demons in her and Jesus had delivered her, had saved her. And she couldn't, the salvation that she received from him was so incredible that we find that it's a life of just utter devotion to Jesus.

And she loved him with all her heart. And that is a natural response when we are delivered. If you are really saved by somebody you will always have a sense of indebtedness to that person.

But Jesus hasn't just saved us, he saved us from but he's also brought us into. And he's given us so much. So Mary was somebody who had this incredible sense of indebtedness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 8 : 17 ] And we find that Mary is the first at the tomb. And we find of course that she's heartbroken because when she got to them the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb you see this at the very beginning early when 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 and she said they've taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid.

we find here that Mary is looking for Jesus but she's looking for Jesus in the wrong place. And that is often true with people.

She was looking for a Jesus who wasn't there. And that is often the case that we will find that sometimes people who are beginning to look for Jesus beginning to seek Jesus beginning to search for Jesus will sometimes be looking for Jesus in the wrong place.

What do we mean by that? Well I don't know but maybe for some in here tonight and that's just might not be true for anybody. But sometimes when the Lord begins to work within your heart one of the things that happens is you begin to lose the full enjoyment that you used to have out of life in its normal course of events that the world doesn't give you kind of just what it used to give you.

[ 9 : 58 ] Because before you just you lived your life you got on with things in your work in your leisure you had a way of life and that was that was fine you just did this and everything was going the way you wanted it to go or so you thought.

But you know when the Lord begins to work where he's beginning to touch into your heart and there's a spiritual aspect to it you begin to get a bit dissatisfied with life.

And sometimes you don't know what is happening because that can be quite a disturbing thing particularly when you're not sure just what's happening. And you're beginning to question what's going on? Why do I not get the satisfaction that I used to get in this?

Why are things changing? Why am I appetite for what I used to do? Why is it not the same? And it can be quite disconcerting and quite disturbing and sometimes people while they're there will begin to respond in all kind of strange ways and will sometimes try and drink out of the world's pleasures more than they have ever done before.

Because they're trying to find what they used to get they can't get so they try and go in deeper into it. And that is why we must always be slow to judge people.

[ 11 : 23 ] Because sometimes people you might be looking at and say look at the direction that person is going. That person may not be going in the direction you're thinking. That person is maybe responding to the first movements of God within their heart but they don't know how to respond.

Because life has been thrown upside down and they're trying to deal with things in the only way that they know how. So we've always got to be careful not to judge. That's why we're told in the Bible judge not that you be not judged.

Because we don't know often what's going on within that person's heart. We don't know exactly where they're at, how they're responding to particular situations. So sometimes people will look for Jesus in the wrong place.

But the thing is once the Lord begins to work within a person's heart, two things will begin to happen. One is there will become a greater awareness of ourselves but then will become an awareness of himself.

That might take time. For some people it might happen really quickly. for other people it might be over a long process of time. But the thing is nobody will ever seek the Lord without finding him.

[ 12 : 42 ] You might say that's a very, have you the right to say that? Yes. That's what the Bible says. It's not me who says it. Jesus said very clearly seek and you shall find.

Knock and the door will be opened unto you. ask and you will receive. We're told whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Not might be saved but shall be saved. I remember a person coming to me and he said I'm seeking the Lord. I really want to be a Christian. The Lord's not answering me.

And he was really he was you could see he was genuinely seeking and he was quite disturbed over it. And he felt that the Lord was not being through to himself. Because he said I am seeking and I'm not finding.

And all I could say to him was you will. When the Lord says seek and you will find it doesn't necessarily mean you will find this instant. The Lord doesn't say seek and you will find right now.

[ 13 : 43 ] But seek and you will find. And that person did come to find the Lord. But it's when your person is seeking if you are genuinely truly seeking the Lord you will find.

And so Mary of course did eventually find Jesus. And we find here that Mary when she comes to the tomb she stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she stooped to look in.

And Mary of course is here with a broken heart. and when she looked in she saw that there were two angels there in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain.

One at the head and one at the feet. Now it's I don't believe that many people will see angels.

There are times the Lord as he did here enabled Mary to see these two angels. They were there. they were there before she came and she saw them quite clearly.

[ 14 : 58 ] There might have been other people who didn't see them. There were there are times say for instance when Elisha was in the city and the city was surrounded by the enemy and Elisha's servant was distraught with fear and he was saying we're doomed.

And Elisha said to him you know there are more with us than there are against us. And the servant Elisha's servant thought I'm sure he was thinking Elisha must be beginning to lose himself a wee bit and Elisha just prayed Lord open the young man's eyes that he may see.

And the Lord did he opened the young man's eyes and he saw that the whole hillside everywhere was surrounded by an angelic presence.

And little do we realize but we've got to remember that every believer remember we're told that the angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation.

An heir of salvation is somebody I believe who is a Christian or who is going to be a Christian. If you are an heir to salvation it means that salvation is going to belong to you.

[ 16 : 14 ] And maybe it might be some here tonight who are an heir of salvation and you don't yet know it. Well you've got to seek and find the Lord. But the angels are ministering spirits to you.

That's an extraordinary thing. How little we realize the deliverances that we've had. I wonder how often the Lord has sent his angel to protect us, to keep us, to hold us back, to change something. We don't know. But here we have this incident at the grave and there are these two angels placed beautifully, one at the head and one at the feet.

Somebody said Jesus was put to death between two criminals and he was buried between two angels. Whether these angels were there from the moment that Jesus' body was placed into the tomb, I don't know.

In all probability, yes, but we don't know. Anyway, the angels asked a question to us which may seem strange because they said to her in verse 13, they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping?

[17:28] Mary probably thought that was the most absurd question. And if we didn't know the story of how it unfolded, we would think it was a strange question they asked as well.

For Mary, it was very obvious why she was weeping. And for anybody else who was present there, it would be very obvious why she was weeping. She was brokenhearted. She had seen what had happened to Jesus, the most beautiful person this world has ever seen, who brought so much love and peace and beauty into people's lives.

And his enemies had taken him and crucified him and they had done to his body what was unimaginable, just the most horrific, abusive, hatred was poured out upon him.

Mary had seen that. And now it was like the final indignity that they'd now taken away his body. And that she couldn't even put the spices, that she couldn't even anoint the last duty that she wanted to do to the Jesus whom she loved.

That's why she's weeping. She's broken hearted. So for someone to say, why are you weeping?

She must have thought, that is a strange question. But it wasn't a strange question to the angels.

[18:41] Because the angels are saying, can you not see Mary? This is one of the most wonderful moments. There is no reason to weep.

Jesus is, he's risen, he's alive. And you know, sometimes, to a certain extent, the Lord might say the same to ourselves.

angels. Because if we could see the full picture, there might be things that have broken your heart in this world. Things that have crushed you.

Maybe you've wept many tears. But if only you could see, and maybe you won't in this world, but maybe in the world to come, you will see there's been another side to it altogether.

together. And I think the Lord says over his people quite often, why are you weeping? Trust me. Because the story is not complete.

[19:44] You're only seeing so far. You can only see this side of the picture. There's another side. And you will see it one day. I believe the Lord is saying that over to us.

Because we're always going to remember that God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. And we've often got to leave things there. But God is always working.

Always working. And so Mary of course says, they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have laid him.

Mary's really saying, this is what I need to find Jesus. And then we come to the next moment, which really is, I think it's one of the most beautiful moments of all.

And there's everything in it. There's beauty, there's glory, there's wonder, there's even humor in it. There are so many aspects to it.

[20:43] Because as Mary has been spoken to by the angels, verse 14, having said this, she turned around and she saw Jesus standing. But she didn't know that it was Jesus.

Now, this is in keeping. people may say, how did she not know it was Jesus? Well, it was early morning, so maybe the light wasn't fully clear. Her eyes were blinded by tears, so maybe her vision wasn't 20-20, she wasn't seeing as clearly.

But there's also the aspect, this is in keeping with all the other resurrection appearances of Jesus, where the disciples and where his followers didn't instantly recognize.

There was often this Jesus appearing before, and then they recognized him, then there was a recognition. And it's quite possible and it's quite probable that there was a change that had taken place in him.

He was still the same, it was still the same body, and yet there was something different. not instantly recognizable. There will be another change, of course, when Jesus ascended, when his

full ascension, and it's going to be the same for ourselves.

[ 22 : 02 ] When we rise from the dead, in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we are resurrected, we will rise in the same body as we were put into the grave. Very same body, not somebody else's, not parts of somebody else, but our own body.

And again, these are concepts that blow your mind. Because sometimes you say, how is that possible? I have no idea. But you think, if we had been witness to what took place at the very beginning, where God took the dust to the ground, and if we had seen God take the dust to the ground, and make man, and then breathe into man the breath of life, man became a living soul, and then putting Adam to sleep, and taking out a ribbon, building and forming beautifully a woman, you'd say to yourself, this is incredible.

So the God who did this at the very beginning is going to do that recreate, where he is going to bring, the graves are going to open, and the dead will rise.

And we have no problem in believing that, because that's what the word of God tells us, because you don't have to understand everything you believe, that's the beauty of faith, faith lays hold upon the truth, you believe it, you live in it, it's your hope, it's your future, it's as real as if it's happening here and now, even although you don't understand it, it's the same with the incarnation, we're told it's a mystery, it is a mystery, people say explain how the son of God became flesh, well the bible says great is the mystery of godliness, Christ manifests in the flesh, the moment you understand explain a mystery, it is no longer a mystery, where there's many things we know about it, but there are things that go beyond, beyond where our minds can go, but we believe it, and so it is with regard to the resurrection, but one of the things that will happen at the resurrection, there will be a change between the body that is put into the ground, and the body that will be in glory, and Paul likens it in the same way as you plant a seed, and that seed becomes a flower, the flower only became a flower because of the seed, it wasn't from another seed, it was from that seed that was planted, that's where the plant or the flower grew, the seed doesn't really look like the flower, but the flower couldn't have been there apart from that particular seed, and that's who he's saying it's going to be for us, we are like planted into the ground like the seed, but we will grow into the flower in glory, that's how the resurrected body will be, but here is Mary and she thinks that this person that she speaks to is a gardener because again

Jesus asks her the question, woman why are you weeping, who are you seeking, I suppose there must have been a kind of authority about him and Mary supposing him to be the gardener she said to him sir, if you know, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I find something it's really quite extraordinary here, because this is, this scene is so beautiful, and there's almost a reverent humor in it, because Mary is asking Jesus, have you carried away the body, she's asking have you anything to do with the removal of the body of Jesus, oh yes, he had everything to do with it, she didn't realize of course that it was Jesus,

[ 26 : 19 ] Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in the raising of the Lord Jesus, the Bible makes that clear to us, just as the very same as at creation, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were involved in the creation of the world, Father, Son and Spirit are involved in you being born again, they're involved in everything, and Father, Son and Spirit were involved in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Mary again, it would appear looking at this, supposing him to the gardener, she said, sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've laid him and I'll take him away.

It was reckoned that Mary was somebody who obviously had some amount of wealth, because it wouldn't have been easy to take a body and to find a grave and to be able to pay for all that unless you had means.

So it's obvious that Mary was somebody who had means. So she's saying all this, sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've laid him and I'll take him away.

And Jesus said to her, Mary. Now it would look that after she had said that, it looks like she turned back to look into the grave. And although Jesus had spoken to her, it's when he said that one word, Mary, she turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni.

[ 27 : 53 ] It's like you can see her just turning back round and there's this moment of instant recognition. I can't believe my eye. Teacher, it's you.

I think it's just one of the most sublime moments in scripture, this recognition. Some of the greatest moments, all it takes is our word.

Some of the greatest scenes in life, sometimes it's just a look. One of the most powerful moments in the life of the disciples was the look that Jesus gave to Peter.

That's what broke his heart up until Jesus had looked at him. Peter was bold in his denials, not bold because he was scared, he was, he had lost it.

He was denying Jesus but vehemently. Then we find Jesus turning, didn't say a word, he just looked at Peter. And Peter went out into the night, broken, grieving, just a look.

[ 28 : 58 ] and here is just a word. I hope tonight that Jesus will speak a word, that he will speak to you, your name, that he will say, look, I'm here for you.

This is personal. I want you to turn to me. See, Mary turned right round at the word of Jesus. She was facing the other way. When he said Mary, she turned round.

I hope there might be somebody here tonight that will turn round at the voice of Jesus. That Jesus will speak to you, that his word will go into your heart, say, come to me, come to me, even tonight, here, just as you are.

And then Jesus said to her, Mary, she turned and said to him, which means teacher, Jesus said to her, do not cling to me. Now, it's very obvious when Jesus says that.

I think Mary has run, I would imagine, and grabbed him, hugged him, held him. He goes, don't cling to me. For I have not yet ascended to the Father.

[ 30 : 11 ] But go to my, in some of the translations it has, don't touch me. That's not what Jesus is saying because some people cannot understand. Because if you follow that line of don't touch me, people have argued and then said, well, why later on does Jesus say to Thomas to come and to touch him?

But the word is cling to me, don't tie and hold me. He's saying to Mary, it's different. It's now on a spiritual dimension.

I am going to be with you as much as I ever was. In fact, I'm going to be with you even more. Maybe not at a physical level as I was, where I interacted with you, but it's going to be at a spiritual level because the Holy Spirit will come into your heart and abide there and reveal all of me to you.

There's a lot we could say there. Notice what Jesus says, and I love this, this will finish. He says, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my father and to your father, to my God and your God.

go to my brothers. Do you know the last time Jesus had seen the disciples, with the exception of John, who followed to the cross, the last Jesus saw of the disciples was them running away from him.

[ 31 : 37 ] The last he had seen of Peter was there where Peter was denying him and Jesus looked at him. As it says, they all forsook him and fled.

And yet Jesus is saying to them, tell my brothers, I love that. That is just so full of love and forgiveness. Jesus is saying, go and tell my brothers, they're my family, I love them.

And this just shows the very heart of Jesus. You know, in life, far too often we hold grudges. And when people maybe do something wrong or we feel that they've let us down or done the dirty or something, you know, it's so easy to be filled with grudges and bitterness.

And this is the beauty of Jesus. Although they'd all run away and left him in his hour of need. I says, look, I want you to go and tell my brothers, my family, those that I love.

This is a Jesus that we worship and we serve. May we know his love. May we know his spirit. May we know him as our Lord because the alternative is empty.

[ 32 : 59 ] We've got nothing. If we don't have Jesus, we really have nothing. We have nobody. So please don't go out of here tonight without at least asking the Lord, Lord, just as you spoke to Mary and turned around, please speak to me.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray that this word may indeed go right down into the depth of our heart. We need you, Lord.

We need your power. We give thanks that the gospel is the power of God and to salvation to everyone that believes. We pray that all of us here tonight may believe in you.

Lord, take us to our home safely and do us good and cleanse us, we pray, from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.