

Jesus the Gardener

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[0 : 0 0] We looked at an Easter theme last week by looking, you'll recall, at a collect, a side glance at a little poem, but it was an Easter theme, a collect for Easter.

So I just, I want to today with you stay with the Easter theme. It is, what is today's third Sunday into Easter?

Easter, every Sunday for the Christian is Easter-centric, isn't it? I use a sort of modern sounding phrase.

Holy Saturday, Christians of course just assume this, the very structure of the world, of the week, teaches this. Holy Saturday used to be the Sabbath, but on the first day of the week, Jesus rose and a new Sabbath dawned.

And it dawned, I want to use this word a few times today, it dawned strangely, as we will see today. All of the resurrection narratives, I was talking this morning about trying to give an overview of a lot of them.

[1 : 1 0] All of the resurrection narratives are a bit strange, they're unexpected, they're a bit awkward. They're, in their own way, I think, disturbing.

They challenge both unbelief, obviously, and I've come to believe that they challenge easy, thoughtless belief. Belief comes, that is to say, at a price.

And I think today's passage, we're going to look at a passage today from John's Gospel. I think today's passage highlights this truth, that, again, that belief comes at a price.

At John, chapter 20, verse 20, you hear John say, Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

It's one of my favorite Easter verses, because of it's so low-key, ridiculously low-key. It must have been, you think, if the Gospels were edited, they weren't. But if the Gospel of John was edited, and in the light of that verse, he was written by some Edwardian British gentleman.

[2 : 1 8] Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. You know, sort of, was that all? He put it differently than that. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Does John mean his best reader to understand that these glad disciples had now worked it all out, if you will? They were now in the presence of God's great answer to the human dilemma.

Here, in their very presence, is the new humanity, prepared for eternal life, and a new heavens, and a new earth. And more and more, had they worked this out, all of this, that this one, they were now in the presence of the resurrected one.

Did they understand that one is able to, that he is able, excuse me, the resurrected one is able to give you participation in his life?

Imagine that. His sinless life may be for others. They were glad, the Gospel says, in the presence of the Lord. Well, how glad were they?

[3 : 26] How thorough was their gladness? How much of it had they worked out? Something along these lines, in the discussion time you can tell me if I'm over-reading here, but I hope I'm not.

Something along these lines about this kind of thing is answered, or comes into view at least in our passage today. Something about the unfolding mystery of the resurrection and what it means is peculiarly present in today's passage.

And so I hope, obviously, looking at it will be of profit for us all. So this, I want to look, there is the passage we want to look at today. Today, you'll see why, I think the talk is called Jesus the Gardener out there.

You'll see why. Do you know this passage about Mary? She stood weeping outside the tomb. And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, says John's Gospel, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head, one at the feet.

They said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

[4 : 56] Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? 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 Hebrew, Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

But go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, I have seen the Lord.

And she told them that he had said these things to her. There you have it. How do you comment on that?

Before I try, we should say a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for your word, for its power, for the promise of so much meaning in it.

[6 : 01] So help us, Lord, open our hearts and minds to understand what you would give to us today. Lord, give us understanding, to your glory and our benefit.

Amen. Amazing passage. Just remarkable.

John 20, 11 to 18, that is. I would think that if you thought about these things comparatively, and it probably is rarely of any profit to do that kind of thing, but here is perhaps, for some, this would be their favorite new resurrection passage.

I don't know how you figure out which is your favorite. The road to Emmaus always strikes me as astonishing when you read it. In fact, it just silences you. You think, remember the witness of Malcolm Muggeridge.

No one who has ever tried to write could doubt the authenticity of this story. There's something in the very words which breathes truth. The road to Emmaus, he comments on that story.

[7 : 10] This one again, it just strikes you as who could have made this up. It's astonishing. It almost shimmers, and not maybe because of the presence of angels in the scene.

They tend to shimmer, angels. Angels in bright raiment, says the hymn, roll the stone away. Two. Here, we notice that there are two.

Up in verse 12, she saw two angels in white, we're told. I love these little details in Scripture. Sometimes they just grab your attention. You want to stay with them.

She saw two angels in white. Got that? There were not three in purple. Two, in case you're ever getting a Bible test. Two angels in white.

There you have it. Apparently, just an aside here, it was never clear to me sometimes about burial stuff amongst the Jews. You know, in the first century, apparently, in first century Palestine, bodies were turned to bones, and then to dust, presumably.

[8 : 21] But they turned to bones in their cave tombs. And then interested parties would take the bones away and deal with them in some honorable way.

Put them in stone jars and whatnot. So that's why the body of Jesus is in one of these cave tombs, as Mary comes in the morning to visit it.

Angels, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, are sent to serve those who are to attain salvation. Presumably, that's what they're doing on Easter Sunday, right? They're there to help us, to help the early church find its bearings about Jesus raised.

So they come, and they do different things in the Gospels. They do different kinds of work. You recall in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew says that an angel came and rolled the stone away.

Mary seems to have made two trips to the tomb on that momentous morning. Again, so there are angels there, and they are ministering servants.

[9 : 37] They convey messages, you find out in this passage. In all the Gospel passages, they sometimes will say things like, Go tell his disciples, or he is risen.

They sometimes announce the resurrection. But here, specifically, it's an interesting note in this passage, up there at verse 13, I think it is.

Yes, verse 13. They said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? What do you make of that question?

Why did they ask that? Were they really perplexed? Did they not know why she was weeping at a tomb early in the morning? Or is this a kind of speech that gets her used to their presence?

Woman, why are you weeping? They ask her. Again, they are dressed in white. That perhaps notes their purity.

[10 : 37] There is something else here that is interesting to note about them. At verse 12, she saw these two angels in white, and they are sitting, you see it up there, verse 12, sitting where the body of Jesus had laid.

And John says, One at the head, one at the feet. They weren't standing together holding hands. They were sitting, sort of defining where the body had been.

Isn't that interesting? One at the head, one at the feet. Do angels deal in symbolism? Is that what we are being told there? It is a little detail, but I just, I don't know the answer to this.

But, she meets these two beings, and one is at the head, and one is at the feet of where Jesus' body had been. Almost as defining for her its emptiness, maybe.

Maybe these thoughtful angels, who dress appropriately for occasions, and symbolically, I guess it is, define where the body of Jesus had been, and they inquire about why she's weeping.

[11 : 44] I just want to note these angels here. They are ministering to Mary. It's a very, there it is. Mary, Mary Ames.

I want to call her Mary Ames. I never quite get the pronunciation of her name right. So, and out of affection, I want to call her Mary Ames. Mary Ames meeting with them passes without comment from John.

He just describes what was going on. I wonder if she thought that they were tomb guards, or gardener assistants. Was her grief so consuming, that she didn't really allow it to register, just how strange their presence was.

It's good to just ponder a passage like this, a resurrection passage. John's Gospel, of all the Gospels, you're aware of it, if you've studied John's Gospel formally, or by yourself, or in a Bible study group, or read commentaries.

Of all the Gospels, it allows, it permissions a presumption. The presumption being that John means by detail. John's Gospel is just rife with symbolism that cries out to be pondered, and thought about, and to look for its meaning.

[13 : 13] I would think that, what we see here, according to John, is that, the divine presence may appear, but remain hidden. Maybe you think that's a fairly obvious thing, that you've picked up from the Gospels.

And maybe it is obvious, but it's something that I like to ponder. And maybe, I think it's here in John's, the way John is presenting his narrative.

It remains hidden. Heaven remains sovereign. God allows, or permissions our meeting with him, and he even allows our belief.

Mary M. sees, and yet, the eyes of her heart, await a true seeing. It's almost as if John is saying, we've all been there. Do you think he means that?

John might be saying that. On heaven's terms, you meet with heaven. You don't meet heaven on your own terms. For Mary, it's still Holy Saturday, when she goes to the tomb.

[14 : 22] Noting the obvious in this passage, Mary knows that Jesus is dead, and the best she can do is minister to the body. They have taken his body away, and I don't know where to find it, she says.

Maybe John means irony here, even. I don't know. She says that to the gardener, doesn't she? The man she thinks is the gardener.

somebody's taken the body of Jesus' way, and I don't know where to find it. Does John again mean irony by that? It will soon, we find out as we read through the whole passage, it will soon be very hard to find the body of Jesus, because the body of Jesus will soon ascend to his Father.

That's what Jesus wants Mary to know, as we find out later. I don't know, but there may be here, an echo of Paul's statement, that we no longer know Christ according to the flesh.

There are different ways of knowing Jesus, different times of knowing. So if you stay with this body theme in this passage, later on down here, isn't it odd at verse 17, when Jesus says, Mary, don't hold on to me.

[15 : 50] Don't hold on to me. Isn't that enigmatic, in true John style, Johannine style. Its meaning sort of slides away from the mind.

It's as if Jesus says to Mary, in this passage, Mary, now allow the passion of your clinging grief to be transformed into perhaps heavenly adoration.

I will go to my passion. I'm going to my Father. To jump right into sort of body themes that are in this passage.

But back to something earlier, and such a fascinating earlier thing. Maybe it's the most famous thing about this passage.

At verse 15, Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? And then famously, supposing him to be the gardener.

[16 : 57] Supposing him to be the gardener. Isn't that fascinating stuff? She thought he was the gardener. If you were an early church father, I'm guessing here, I don't have any citation here, but it is probably in this passage, you would think that John is here perhaps at his theological best.

John is being a bit subtle here. He, John, has in mind, first off, a step back. John has in mind, as he writes his gospel, a remembered fact.

He knows that Mary M, as I'm calling her, that morning mistook Jesus for a gardener. And what John, I think, wants us to think is, what an interesting mistake that is.

What a fascinating mistake. What an error that is. I think John needs us to think, and again, in the discussion time, you'll tell me if I'm loopy about this.

Adam, you know, was a gardener. And he lived in a garden. So now, a second Adam has appeared in the world, and he's in a garden.

[18 : 20] This obedient Adam, this triumphant Adam, this one who has been triumphant over the tempter and over death. It's as if John is saying, Mary is wrong, but Mary is profoundly right at the same time.

She thought he was the gardener. Almost she got it. He's the second Adam in the garden. I think that's there. We associate Paul, of course, in the New Testament with the conception of Jesus as the second Adam.

A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came, says Newman's famous hymn. But John just points to it quietly on this view, I think.

John just says, Mary thought he was the gardener. And the gospel writer here waits for the reader, waits for the hearer, just to sort of quietly pick it up in time.

John's gospel is the most pondering gospel, the one that deals in so much symbolism. Not just for the sake of doing a puzzle, of course, a Bible puzzle.

[19 : 39] No, the heart, when this recognition comes to you, if true, I think it is, the heart bows at this recognition. How great is Jesus, it's said to us, at this submerged level.

How great he is. World historical and his uniqueness doesn't do it justice. No one else could. No one else could claim to start the world over again.

But John is saying, Jesus does that. He's the world starting over again. He's the second Adam. That's why Mary thought he was the gardener. He's the second Adam.

Our Lord starts the world over again. As far as I know, no other great religious person ever in history has ever even claimed that. to start the world over again.

Just, the John stuff throughout the New Testament, as you know, has its own tone, its own distinctive feel. It's constant across gospel, as we're looking at here this morning.

[20 : 51] His three short epistles, the last book of the Bible, the apocalypse of St. John, the divine. It's easy to note this tone, but it's, to define it, it's quite difficult.

Turns of phrase, is that what does it? Vocabulary, diction, choices of themes, structure. However you define it, you just know it's there.

There's a Johannine feel. There's a way that John does things. I kind of feel it in my bones, noting that, that there's probably a hidden connection, hard to demonstrate, but between Mary's weeping and the apocalypse of St. John telling us that there's coming a day when God will wipe away all tears.

You notice in, in this passage, the angels want to know why, why she's weeping, and Jesus wants to know why she's weeping. Everybody's concerned about Mary and her weeping that morning.

So John, just quietly brings up this theme of Mary's weeping on the morning of the resurrection. It's kind of obvious, of course, Mary's weeping in the gospel, but in the apocalypse we hear beautifully that the Lord is going to wipe away all tears.

[22 : 13] The point being that Mary meets her risen Lord and she sends him on her way with a task, but Mary, Mary will go, Mary will go on living in this world, won't she, and she's going to cry again.

She's not invited to leave the world with Jesus, but she'll never weep, presumably, in the same way. She'll never mourn like those who are without hope.

All the bitter, dehumanizing, alienation of death is overcome by Jesus, but for Mary, there will still be sadness in her life.

She doesn't enter into the fullness of resurrection joy, not yet, but the promise is there. So John leaves out saying a little detail for sure that Mary stopped crying because she's going to weep again, but she'll never weep again in the same way.

So John just leaves that point hanging around in the text, if you will, and he just continues. Famously, now you see here, verse 15, no, not verse 15, verse 16, one more verse.

[23 : 36] Mary is just there in the garden and we find out that the gardener knows her name. Verse 16, Mary, he says. Jesus said to her, Mary.

And she responds in recognition, doesn't she? Rabboni, she says. Or at verse 16, at the end of Rabboni, Rabboni, which means a teacher.

Isn't that interesting? John decides to remember Mary's response response that this little moment occurs in Hebrew.

It may have been Hebrew slash Aramaic. This was the language of Jesus in his teaching, apparently. No one knows, a little aside, no one knows for sure about Jesus linguistically, about the languages that he commanded.

He presumably, he did speak Aramaic and mainly Hebrew and presumably he had a bit of Greek in him as well.

[24 : 47] If he did business, it's been said often by scholars with Joseph as a young man, as a carpenter, there would have to be interaction with Greek customers.

They must have had a working knowledge, a working proficiency perhaps in Greek. But here, isn't it interesting, John, why does John remember that Mary addresses Jesus here as teacher?

Evidently, you might think she treasured Jesus as her teacher specifically. Her unguarded address, this is unguarded, Mary unguarded speaking right from her heart.

She remembers it and it's remembered by John, it's remembered in the tradition as she remembered him as teacher. Is it that the teacher Jesus had given Mary recognition?

Is that what you get from a good teacher? And that builds you up. The teacher Jesus recognized Mary and taught her. And that was very meaningful for Mary.

[26 : 08] This, apparently, you can guess, this had been the thing that had transformed her. And now, the implication is, since she addresses him as, oh, my boni, my teacher, Mary, her heart would want to return to that particular goodness.

is this, in fact, what Mary finds out right away that she must forgo. Mary must be urged on to more belief about Jesus.

She must not merely believe in Jesus as she had before. Rabboni, oh, my teacher, you're here.

Things are back the way they were. all the goodness I received from you as my teacher, it's back again. But I think, again, we find out right away, don't we, that Mary is told, no, it can't be that way anymore, Mary, do not hold me.

You can't hold on to me like that. Almost, this is odd about the resurrection story, something further about them that strange, maybe unexpected.

[27 : 29] There is in them a note of urgency sometimes. As I read them over and over again, I think, well, I wouldn't have expected that unless it's there.

I would have expected more just being with him and worshipping him. But there's this urgency. Jesus says to her, no, Mary, don't touch me. It's sometimes translated down at verse 17.

I hope you can see it there at the back. Do not hold me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. There's a kind of, things are different now, Mary.

Go and tell my disciples. He gives her a task to do. She meets the resurrected Lord, then there's this urgency to get on with things. That's interesting. There's a kind of, again, in all of these gospel stories, road to Emmaus, his meeting with the twelve.

All of the meetings across the four gospels have a slight touch of urgency about them. Hate to quote it, but I can't resist. It's captured by a line by Wordsworth, made famous by good old C.S.

[28 : 40] Lewis, surprised by joy. Do you know the rest of that line from Wordsworth? Surprised by joy, impatient as the wind. Joy is now in our presence.

But there's an immediately an impatience is recognized. Things must change, Mary, between us. Don't hold me. I'm going to my father.

Now you go. Tell the disciples that I'm raised. It's an unexpected little turn in the story for me there. But I find it quite lovely. There it is. Mary, then Mary is given the task of going to my brethren, the Lord says, and say to them, I'm ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God.

Mary went and said to the disciples, I've seen the Lord. She was given a task to go do that. That's interesting. She's given the task of telling the disciples that he is risen and she has seen him.

Therefore, I can ask a question, go back to where I began. Do you think belief was easy for Mary? She came to the tomb early in grief.

[29 : 58] She came evidently in fragility. She was weeping. She was crying. She sees angels, some people would consider almost a sign of mental fragility, but she doesn't recognize them as such.

Then she meets Jesus, but initially there's no recognition. Then when she hears her name spoken, immediately she hears that her teacher is again going away.

I'm back, Mary, but I'm going away. I'm going to my Father. I'm ascending to your Father and my Father. Maybe it goes something like this, that John means us to pick up as we ponder John 20, 11 to 18.

Belief in the fact of the resurrection was a gift to Mary, but it had consequences that are surprising. She was surprised by joy, yes, but it is a surprising joy, you know, in a sense.

She was made, of all things, a theological messenger. The Lord says to her, she's to go and say to his disciples that the Lord is risen, and then she's to say he's going to the Father.

[31 : 21] It's as if Mary is tasked with saying he goes in vindicating power to his Father and our Father. It kind of makes you wonder what this teacher had been teaching this student.

I wonder if Mary had been taught along some lines that made her the appropriate person to hear this message and to pass it on to the disciples. Why this particular message for Mary?

Don't hold me, I have not yet ascended to the Father, but tell the brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

There's something just waiting to be known about this. Why this particular teaching? The resurrection narratives, it reminds me as I read them, this particular one as well, the resurrection narratives are fact narratives with their theological meaning ever present.

They're not just facts, they're also theological meaning, aren't they? So the resurrection is a joy to Mary, but also a call for Mary.

[32 : 32] John doesn't hide that here. Only a life, apparently Mary will learn this, a life lived in the light of the resurrection will be pleasing to God.

She has to get on with something. She has to get on with a task of believing more. It's interesting to note, if you notice about Mary, she's in this particular Mary, she's in all four gospels at the end.

She's a very significant person, isn't she? She shows up in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In Matthew, she's at the tomb early, as in John here, and discovers the tomb empty.

And in Matthew, she's with others. And she has another, she has in Matthew's gospel, an angelic encounter as well.

Mary was at the tomb apparently twice that morning. She really wanted to be near Jesus. In Mark, which famously is the shortest resurrection material in all four gospels, she is told that Jesus is risen by an angel, and all that Mark chooses to remember is that she ran away from the tomb terrified.

[33 : 58] That's amazing. That, to me, is one of the more utterly convincing resurrection story. That would be me. I would be terrified and I would run.

In Luke, again, she's with others at the tomb early. She encounters two angels in white. Very much, very much like Matthew and John.

And then as we see in John, she had an encounter just like the above. Accounts are various and yet they're quite consistent. She has this encounter with Jesus.

But only John includes, only John would do this, wouldn't he? Only John includes this brief, theologically suggestive word from the Lord.

I'm ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God. She's to go with this theological message to the disciples. That's so interesting.

[35 : 01] Mary, it won't be the way it has been before. I'm going away now. You be the messenger of my going away. You've come looking for me.

You've found joy, but you're getting a surprising message. I'm going away, Mary. You've got to learn that. I'm going away. So in the intro, the question was posed, how much joy was there on the resurrection morning?

What kind of joy? Joy, how much meaning about it all was grasped, was taken in? Maybe the Mary M material hints, as I said, at an answer as I drive towards a conclusion.

She goes to the tomb early and runs away in fear, in mar. mar. But later, when she goes to the tomb again, she's entrusted with a message to the twelve, and with a theological message to be pondered.

So in the resurrection narratives, I'm trying to summarize them all, especially in the light of this one. This lovely, I love this story. Hope you love John 20, 11, 18.

[36 : 18] On the resurrection morning, there was fear and wonder. That's to be expected. Then there was a fact, a message, a task, and Mary apparently experienced all of those things.

Mary is the summarizing presence in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I'm guessing. Mary experiences what happens to the whole church as the church hears that he is risen.

I think Mary is that significant. That's why John reports that the Lord gave her a deep theological message for the disciples.

I am going to my Father. That's amazing. You cannot spend, I hope you agree, you could do it much better than I do.

You can't spend too much time on these resurrection narratives. I call them the resurrection mysteries. They're very beautiful. people. And they hammer home.

[37 : 22] I stop. I want to listen to your questions. They hammer home. You should read them over and over again, especially at Easter.

Paul was thinking of this kind of story, the other resurrection stories in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, when he wrote famously, and this is perhaps such a message for our time from Paul.

Paul said, if Christ is not risen, your faith is in vain. Free floating, unanchored religion, spirituality minus historical truth is Gnosticism.

Christians have nothing to do with it. It is the religion of most people most of the time. And from it, like Mary, we must flee, I think.

Flee, that's an empty religion. That is a tomb. That is nothing but an empty tomb. With no one ever in it. We should, we should with Mary flee from that kind of religion and embrace the risen Christ even as he tells us, I'm going to my father.

[38 : 40] And then with him we'll be raised. Mary found a real Jesus that morning. The one who had been her teacher. She could still address him as such.

And he knew her name. Real, real events. Real things to be embraced. Christ is not risen and it's all in vain.

Mary wouldn't have put up with a religious experience at the tomb. She needed her real Lord and she found him. This Easter special, I've just gone back to these stories in the Gospels and just, oh, they leapt out at me.

It's so wonderful. Road to Emmaus. Peter and John racing to the tomb. The Lord appearing in the upper room to Doubting Thomas.

We looked at that last week. And this one, it leaps out at you again, is wonderful. I want to meet Mary M in heaven and ask her to fill in all the details.

[39 : 43] Maybe there'll be better things to do in heaven than that. I would like to do that. Just over a cup of coffee somewhere. On that exalted note, I should say a word of prayer and then have some questions.

Lord, we thank you for our sister in Christ, Mary. And we thank you that she met you on the resurrection morning. And we give you thanks for all of this wonder and glory and awe.

Help us, Lord, to learn more and more of it and grow in these things as you would have us grow in them. You who have ascended to the Father. In your name we pray.

Amen. God bless you.

Please. It's very interesting that if you do a word study on church that it says they are the called out ones.

[41 : 08] And somewhere else by name, and hailed by name, this is the definition of the word, the New Testament word church. Called by name, called out by name, and hailed even is another meaning for the word church.

So this, I link with that. Even to say that with all this going on, that Mary Magdalene might have been the first member of the church.

Because this is what the church is made of. She was trying to bury Jesus into history, like we all do sometimes in our search for Jesus.

We tend to bury him in history. But there are six different definitions that men's concordance gives the church.

And it's all this active activity going on with Jesus addressing us. And what do you think of that idea?

[42 : 26] That Mary is in the church? She means that she was the first called out, called out in this way by name. And so she was searching for a dead Jesus.

And I remember I was doing the same thing before my conversion, he was dead, in history somewhere. And then the living Christ appears in this way, calling me by name.

And a personal Jesus Christ. Sounds good to me. Would she be the second member of the church?

Is Jesus the first member of the church? He's the head of the church. Yeah. And as such, he's the chief cornerstone.

So, my brethren, my brethren, your father, my God, your God. It's all interactive. But that's a good comment, Bill.

[43 : 32] Thank you. I've never made a list of firsts. Who's the first? Watch out. You never make a count of it, you see. That's right.

That's right. If the church believes that, they make up hope immediately in their history. So, it's a very dangerous, sort of a dangerous place to step by calling me the first member of the church.

It seems to be. Well, we're going to First Baptist today. Is there a connection? This evening. When I look at this passage, I'm amazed that she doesn't recognize him.

That she thinks he's a gardener. And I think of our Lord, our Lord being the gardener, because he created the first garden, the garden of Eden, and since that then gave it to God to Him, that was God.

And yet she can do it. I think he's going to be the chief gardener. So, she's right when she's the gardener. But how, I wonder what the actually looks like.

[44 : 42] I can't help myself. How is he correct? Yeah, exactly. So, I instruct by the functionality of all of it. So, I find many layers of meaning in this.

I see you as the gardener. And also by the fact that Jesus could have almost like I would say, a spoken device or something. Because he would be in crowd and he would just damage.

He would just disappear. But if he doesn't choose from the right to that, and if he doesn't announce himself to you in some way, you don't see him. You literally don't see him. You'll see something else that's darling.

So, I guess that's what I wanted to say. The functionality of it and the activity of it and the ministry of how she doesn't see the most familiar person.

She would recognize his body to be recognizable in the resurrection to one another. So, there's something very complicated. Thank you for that. I think that's exactly right.

[45 : 41] Yeah. I think this God, John is implying, some of the gospel writers do too, that on his terms he'll meet with you. Mary thinks he's the gardener.

The Lord goes along with that apparently for a while. And then he chooses the moment of recognition by saying her name. Yeah, that's just a lovely moment.

It couldn't be better. It's gorgeous. Mary. And he opens her eyes. That's why these passages are glorious.

Sir, please. Yeah, it's funny about enjoying, because it says that I will send you another in the region more true. And maybe there's an urgency about this particular thing.

that he wants to bypass Mary at the moment. Plus, this is going to happen. Another one. I like the idea of poking the bus, especially when she wants to be watching Star Wars.

[46 : 45] But I mean, it was great. The other thing too is that he very easily walks through walls and the locked rooms. Now, he isn't what he was before.

He has a different aspect to himself, which I think she would find when she saw it. She would see that. Yeah, the Gospels just uniquely, they don't beat the drums on this truth, but they seem to reflect the strange otherness going on that morning.

And I like in Mark, an angel is mistaken for a young man. So the angels can be present in their way for us as they minister to us.

They wouldn't, there's no overwhelming of these people on that morning. So the divine order is good the way it comes to them. Jesus wanted to be, I guess, as looking, she thinks I'm the gardener.

I wonder if he enjoyed that little moment. Jim, sure. I think there's yet more to it. Mary has got the tomb and discovered that the body is there.

[48 : 06] the angels have told her that Jesus is risen. She doesn't know what to make of that.

I suspect that when she was moved from the tomb after the angels had said that, what came over her was the sense that surely that can't be.

surely what must really have happened is that somebody's taken the body. You know that was in her mind because she says it in verse 15 of Jesus.

Somebody's taken the body, somebody's desecrated the body. And that's what causes her to burst into tears as she turns and goes back, stands by the tomb and now she's weeping.

And when people are weeping, really weeping from their heart and they can't stop weeping, well, they don't see very much because their eyes are full of tears.

[49 : 16] Surely we all of us know that. She's been reduced to tears and can she see what she's looking at? She looks into the tomb again.

she sees that there are two figures in white, yes. They say, why are you weeping? And she says what's in her heart. They, so unidentified they, must have taken away my lord.

They come, of course, you remember, to embalm the body as a gesture of their paying their last respects.

And now, this is what's in her heart and this is what's reduced to tears. tears. And, if I'm right, then, verse 14, when it says she turned around and saw Jesus standing, she didn't know it was Jesus, it wasn't just that there, though I'm showing you right on this part, it wasn't just that there was something strange, something changed about Jesus, which comes through in all the post-resurrection appearances, because also that she's still weeping and her eyes are full of tears and she can't really see who she's looking at.

I would suppose that that's part of the story of why she's supposed him to be the gardener. The only person she could think of who would be out in the garden at that time, very early in the morning, would be the gardener, the person whose business it is to look after.

[50 : 59] There's this area, this area where the tomb is. And so she says what she says. So if you carry him away, tell me where you laid him, I'll take him away.

That's what I'm here for, really. And the moment of recognition is when she hears his voice, as he says to her, verse 16, Mary.

there's, as I say, there's something elusive about his appearance, so that partly because of her tears and partly because of that she doesn't recognize him, but she knows the voice.

And, well, I just think that's part of the story that John needs us to understand. And to me, it's a very poignant part of the story.

When you're a servant of the Lord, things do sometimes happen which reduce you to tears. And sometimes you can't control those tears.

[52 : 01] What you feel has happened is so sad. Well, that was where Mary was and where Mary went, if you can say it that way.

And this was how Jesus met her, in her tears. She's come unglued, that's how we were going to tell. And, of course, it's transforming when he hears her dance.

Sorry, but she hears his voice for good night. And, I think not holding it in verse 17 is telling us that her first inclination was she realized it was him, was to extend her arms.

She wants to hug him, that's the truth. And probably do it in the way that hugging a superior was done in those days.

And this was quite standard practice, actually. You would kneel down in front of a person you want to hug and hug them around the knees. so that you're expressing supreme respect for them as well as supreme affection for them.

[53 : 16] I guess that all of that is there on top of all the good things that you pointed out to us. I agree with everything you've said.

In the John feel, the way the gospel of John is in its totality. He always invites you to say, okay, there are facts.

Yes, it is true, a weeping person early morning in a fragile mental state might misidentify someone. But then I think John's gospel, he'll agree, Jim, almost immediately invites a theological overlay.

I love these angels in white deciding, you sit there, I'll sit there, that will define for her that the body's not here. They're symbolically acting for her.

That's wonderful, I love that. There is, Jim, will you agree there, on the road to Emmaus, our Lord was quite capable of for an extended period of time, hiding his identity.

[54 : 26] And surely they knew what he looked like. I take it that the two knew what Jesus, and he taught them for a long time, went into a house with them, started to have a meal with them, then his identity is revealed.

Well, they must have been completely deceived by his face, his manner, his everything. But yeah, there's something that's going on in the resurrection morning that's very delightfully wonderful and strange.

language. He's there, he's in perfect continuity, Tom writes good language, but there's also a discontinuity that has to be noted. He is a spiritual body now, I take it.

He's gone into another way of being human. wonderful there. At the very least, your word strange is just the word that we need as the key to open that door, and start us as it were looking through the door to see what we're meant to say.

Strange is remember Michael Green saying it's a word to the wise. A lot of, he listed the examples of this, a lot of commentators in John's gospel die before they finish the task.

[55 : 49] It's a text that defeats its interpreters. It's great. There's a divinity, I say this about all the New Testament, but John's gospel has a divinity about it.

It just leaps out of you. This is the word of God. Who might have commented on this? It burns up my pathetic little words. There's a That interaction between Jesus and Mary reminds me of the shepherd and the flock because the shepherd knows the sheep and the sheep knows the shepherd.

And when he calls them by name, they know. Oh, thank you for that. Exactly. That's the way John's gospel is an echo chamber, isn't it? Thank you for that. Sheila. Well, Harvey, I'm not very good at this metaphysical stuff.

You never were, Sheila. But the events that happened between the crucifixion and the ascension always seem to be a transition period in the existence of Jesus and also in the existence of the people that knew him.

He's not the same kind of totally human being that he was before. He's also not the kind of heavenly person that he is in the process of returning to being.

[57 : 12] I'll put it that way for life a better way. He goes in and out of their lives, recognized not. He eats with one, tells one to touch him, tells somebody else not to touch him, walks through doors that somebody has already mentioned.

It's as if he's conditioning us, in the global sense, to be without him some of the time and to expect him to intervene or come back or be a part of our lives also without any kind of an announcement.

Now that's tantalizing. It's also a little difficult to understand. I'm wondering when he says I'm ascending to my father, is this the ascension, quote unquote, when he disappears into heaven with three witnesses or however many it was, I think it was three.

And in the meantime, he's been back and forth with the father and back and forth with the people on earth. Is this the same ascension? I am ascending to my father because it is after this that he tells Thomas to put his hand into my wounds.

John likes to telescope things when the Lord is lifted up. The first layer of meaning is crucified. He enters into his glory by being crucified.

[58 : 40] John is good at this sort of thing. And then he telescopes the whole mystery of his, that all is his return to the father. His work on earth is done. He's realized salvation.

So I, everything you said, I agree with. You're good at metaphysics. You're just a bit modest. If that's the word. Mary was accompanied by somebody in this visit to the children.

Yeah, she started out with others that morning. Yes. Yeah. Because one woman would not have been believed as a witness. That was in Jewish law. It is still in Islamic law. There you go. Two women equal one man.

Is that, is that for another, maybe we'll have a session on that. Can I just a moment? I like, Sheila, your point is very good.

Tom Wright is really good on this for me. And that he, I think it's Matthew's gospel. He points out that when the Lord was in the, in the, in the presence of his disciples, I think it was a gathered group, probably the 12 more.

[59 : 43] He says, he, he zeroes in on a little passing phrase that Matthew gives us. Some didn't believe. As they looked upon him, they couldn't take it in.

It was so unthinkable for them. And it has that strong expression. So I, I thank you for sharing that with you. Yeah, there is something very different about Jesus. Something hard for us to believe about the resurrection.

Sir, again. Where is a, is a really interesting person because she just seems to appear here at the end of the gospels and plays a, a huge part.

Now, is this the same woman that touched his garment and was healed by faith and had the demons taken out of her? Is that?

I'm not up on the Mary, the Mary stuff gets very confusing. confusing. I don't know. My basic answer is don't know. I don't know. The Lord's ministry was accompanied by a good number of women disciples.

[60 : 51] And sometimes across the gospels, their identity gets a little bit vague. That's all I know. And I never felt any big desire to clear it all up either.

It's wonderful. I know this is the Mary who outside the gospels often ends up in the south of France. People love to have a field day with this Mary.

She's very popular with the fantasizers. But that's a good, someday, brother, you can clear all this up for us in a talk. Across all four gospels.

Jim, again. we can do a bit of that now because Luke says that Mary of Nantala was a woman unto whom Jesus had cast seven devils in.

There had been an exorcism which had transformed her and made a disciple out of her. But the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she's in Luke too, but she isn't identified.

[62 : 00] She had me, but she isn't. What I'd like to add, if I may, Harvey, to what you said a minute ago, is a grammatical point.

I am ascending to my father and your father, says Jesus. Well, the present tense in Greek has an extended quality, which goes beyond the use of the present tense in English.

I am ascending means both. I am in process of ascending, and I am about to ascend, that is, I'm about to finish the prospect, in the near future.

way. As I say, we haven't got an English way of expressing the present tense that catches that extension, that it's a standard usage of the present tense in Greek.

Greek. And I'm sure that here, Jesus means, I am now in a process of ascending to my father, and the process won't be finished for a little while, though it will be finished soon.

[63 : 23] Go and tell my brothers that that's what's happening now, and get used to the fact, this is what it tells you not to hold on to it, physically, you see, get used to the fact that physically, now that I am risen from the dead, I'm not coming back to you as I was before, I shan't be with you, no less, at least I shan't be with you physically, ultimately, although in another sense, a sense of spiritual, personal reality, of course, he will be with us, and he is with us, and will be with us for everyone.

But that point about the present tense, I think, is important. The process of Jesus' ascending began, it seems to me this is what we're asked to understand, it began straight after Jesus walked out of the tomb, not a fact described for us, but it happened.

and I, do you think this is what we offer it to you, you tell me, you think it's right. I illustrate this by saying, well, the journey really that he took after his crucifixion and burial was the journey from the grave to the door, and it was comparable to, one way at least, of going from Vancouver to London, where if you, when you choose to change at Toronto and hang around for two or three hours, with your stock however you see, until the Toronto plant turns off.

I mean, Jesus, there were 40 days in which Jesus appeared and disappeared, and then appeared again, and then came the event in which the disciples saw the cloud come down, and he vanished into the cloud, and they were perfectly certain in their minds that he hadn't gone down, and he hadn't gone sideways, but he'd gone up.

No, I know, that's a good point. That's what Luke means us to. Yes, that's very good. He's got high, and the angels, and then the cloud feels that they're the angels, and they tell the disciples, he's coming back, as you've seen him go.

[66 : 01] In other words, he's coming down as the reigning Lord, you see, for the day of judgment. He hasn't come yet, but he will. I would just say that when you, that was wonderful, Jim, but when you do a teaching metaphor, and just a recommendation, a humble recommendation, don't use Toronto, because Torontonians will think it's literally true, we are the center of the world.

Make it, I don't know, Buffalo, if you know. But you tend me to think that, yeah. Chicago. Chicago, there's a nice spot. I was thinking about, maybe, maybe, I, I like the idea that Mary thinks of Jesus as her teacher.

Maybe he was doing finer points of the Greek present tense, Jim, with her over the time. But no, that's a lovely, yes. So she comes in grief, expecting to deal with a dead body, and she leaves a messenger with a deep, rich theological announcement for the disciples.

It's a surprising turnaround for Mary. So I, thank you. Phil, Phil. Point of language. Mark, whereas Joseph of Marimathia asked plainly for the body of Jesus, Mary doesn't use that language.

She says, my Lord, Lord, they've taken away him. where have you worried of him? And I will take him away.

[67 : 40] Does this signify that she had a different view maybe than even of the other disciples, that his was no ordinary death?

And the subconscious expectation, maybe even conscious, that the resurrection was coming. and therefore it was, he was able to speak of his ascension to her rather than to those who were totally filled with despair.

That is well. Well, I think that's true and what, I mean, it just strikes me as true, but especially Phil in the light of the way John's gospel is written.

That he ponders and expects his readers to ponder deeply. And that, Phil, that's wonderful. That, in the choice of his language, that may very well be there, I think.

You obviously think that is there. But, yes, yes. That reminds me so much that you catch David's message to us a couple, a few weeks back, David, our director short, about that anecdote he told about the funeral director, who foolishly, as David points out to us, referred to what the remains, or sort of separated the identity of the person for the grieving ones from the body, and they wouldn't have nothing to do with it.

[69 : 12] The one I've lost is there. The corpse is deeply connected with them. And for Mary, there's a deep connection, quite reasonably. But you say, yeah, the language is, no, she lives in possibility, if I may coin a phrase, a fairer house than froze.

She may very well have that deep level, the expectation that her Lord might be bigger than death. But she wouldn't dare to speak it to herself, maybe.

Would that be? But the language reveals that possibility. There you go. Bill, thank you very much.

thank you both. Thank you. Excellent.

Excellent as usual. Good to see you. I don't know who's in here. Thank you. Thank you. .