

"Why are you Weeping? Whom are you Seeking?"

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Date: 16 August 2020

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. Let me extend a very warm welcome to you to our evening service here from Stornoway Free Church. Thank you again for joining us. It's been a great encouragement to us to have so many people join services online.

And although we hope that sooner rather than later we'll be able to meet together in our church buildings at the moment, it's very encouraging to find so many people taking up the services online. We're going to begin by a reading from Scripture and our reading is from John chapter 20, Gospel of John chapter 20. And I'm going to read from verse 1 down as far as verse 18.

And Peter said to them, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together. But the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

[1 : 19] Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their old homes. 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 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? They said to them, They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing.

But she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

[2 : 31] Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to 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. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her.

We pray again, God will bless to us, a reading of his word, and to his own name be all the praise and the glory. Now let's draw near to God in prayer, we're going to join together in prayer, let's call upon the Lord.

Gracious God and our Father in heaven, we give thanks, O Lord, tonight for the words that we have been reading that assure us that our Lord Jesus lives, that the one through whom we approach you is alive forevermore, having overcome death, having risen out of the grave.

Lord, we pray tonight that we may know your risen power working within us as we come to worship you. We thank you that all that you promised in regard to the coming of your Holy Spirit, in consequence of your death and your resurrection, has already taken place.

[3 : 54] We come before you tonight, O Lord, anticipating that you will fulfill all that yet remains to be done of the promises you have given to your people, that you will indeed bring them to their final dwelling place in heaven.

We pray tonight, Lord, for a sense of your presence. Lord, we know that we are separate from each other physically, geographically, but we do pray that we may know of your own Spirit with us and in us.

We pray that we may know the unifying power of your truth, for we come not only to worship the same God, but we come to give thanks for that truth that we find set out in your word.

We pray, O Lord, tonight that we may be all the more thankful that we have such a word to guide us. We pray that tonight we may know your own Spirit taking this word, opening it up for us, enabling us to speak and to hear in a way that would bring the truth to our hearts, in a way that would change us inwardly and affect us deeply.

Lord, we pray that you would stir our hearts, enable us inwardly to know of your truth working within us and enabling us, O Lord, to know more of you, to love you more deeply and to become more committed to you through the effect of your own truth on our hearts.

[5 : 16] We thank you tonight that we need not seek to work ourselves in an emotional way towards a height of emotion by which we would somehow think we have achieved something.

We bless you, Lord, that as we come to know you as you reveal yourself to us, so our emotions are thereby stirred. We pray that you would take hold of our hearts and minds tonight.

We ask, O Lord, that you would feed our minds also with your truth. We give thanks that your word is designed not only to touch us inwardly, emotionally, but especially that you come to make yourself known to us through our mind.

We bless you, Lord, that you renew our minds and our wills when you come to change us inwardly. We pray that through being born again we come to know of that mind that is sanctified by your spirit and that is ready to receive your truth.

We pray tonight, Lord, that you would come to fill us with a greater extent in our knowledge of you and that you would give us tonight to be increasingly thankful that your truth reaches us on a daily basis.

[6 : 28] We pray, Gracious One, that you'd bless us as a congregation of your people. We give thanks that we're able to meet together in this way. We give thanks for others in different parts of the world that we know are joining us in these online services.

We pray for them. We thank you for the encouragement it gives us to know that your word as it goes forth from us as a congregation is heard and listened to and responded to in various parts of the world.

We marvel, O Lord, at the way in which such technology enables your word to go forth. We pray that it will be to the furtherance of your glory, to the extending of your kingdom.

We pray that your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven through your word, being blessed increasingly to people like ourselves. We ask that you bless all who belong to us in our families, in our homes, in our neighbourhoods.

We give thanks, Lord, for the measure of liberty that we now enjoy rather than the total lockdown we had some time ago. Help us, we pray, to realise that you are in charge of all that takes place in our providences.

[7 : 41] You are the God of providence, the God who has planned our circumstances in this world as they are today before the world was created by you. You know the purpose, Lord, why things are as they are.

We pray that you would sanctify this time to us and enable us, Lord, to seek you through it and in it and to find that whether we are able to answer every question that arises in our mind or not.

O Lord God, grant that we may make further progress in faith and in godliness and in our understanding of your ways. We pray that you would show us your ways, not only for ourselves as a people, but also for the nation that we belong to.

Bless, we pray again, those who are in charge of us and government. O Lord God, give them that wisdom that they don't have of themselves that none of us has. We give thanks that your word so clearly assures us that if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives abundantly and who does not threaten when we come to him.

We pray for our leaders and we ask that you bless them in government. We thank you that we have a government over us, elected in the free elections that we engage in in this land. Lord, we pray that you protect these freedoms for us, as well as the other freedoms that we presently enjoy, but that we know, Lord, may well be under threat.

[9 : 08] We ask that you would ensure for us, by your own blessing, the protection of our liberties of speech, of conscience, of religion, those things that have been valued for many generations in our land.

We look to you, Lord, and pray that you would prevent the various forces that we find in the world of our day, as you did in times gone by, from coming to overwhelm your church and from coming to be set as the primary forces in our society.

Lord God, let your gospel flourish, we pray. Lord, let your gospel flourish, we pray that you may be in the way that we seek to stand for you and to defend your cause and to promote your cause, not in a negative way, though we must defend it too, but grant that we may be positive in our proclamation and in our promotion of Christ.

Lord, give us to be faithful so that we set your kingship before all that we have contact with. Remember our children, we pray. We give thanks that they are enabled to go back to school, at least in a measure.

We pray that you would bless them as they return to school. We pray that you would bless the teachers, Lord, with added burdens and with various additional responsibilities at this time.

[10:32] We ask, O Lord, that you would give them your blessing, give them your protective care. Watch over them, we pray, and help them in seeking to fulfill that privilege in being teachers of our children, that you would bless themselves and that you would keep and maintain them in mind as well as in body.

And spiritually, Lord, we ask that you would grant increasingly to provide for us those who respect your ways and fear your name to teach our young people. We pray that you bless our council locally.

We ask for them, O Lord, as they wrestle with the issues of the day. We pray that you would also give them wisdom and help them to look to you and to your truth.

And bless all, O Lord, in various areas and levels of authority who already know you and to seek to witness for you to their contemporaries. Bless that witness, we pray.

Make it effective and grant that many others through it will come to join the number of those who follow you and fear you and love you. And now, Lord, we ask that you would continue to bless us.

[11:37] And we pray that you would bless all those tonight who we commend to you, who have lost loved ones in recent times and have the pain of bereavement now to live with and the grief and the sorrow of those who are now missing from their families and from their lives and from their relationships.

Lord God, we pray as we come to your word and find this weeping woman met by yourself and dealt with so wonderfully by yourself. O Lord, may that same presence and same power of the Lord come to meet those who presently weep.

We commit to you all throughout the world, Lord, who have so much trauma to contend with at this time. We pray that you'd bless us in our own nation too when we know of such weeping so abundant throughout our countryside and towns as well.

We pray that you would continue to bless those who are employers and those who are employed.

We pray for those who have lost their jobs, who are unemployed, those who may not find it easy to find a place of work again.

We pray for them. We pray for our students. We ask that you would bless them, Lord, as they will in all likelihood be somewhat hampered by the conditions that still prevail.

[12:58] O Lord God, we pray that you would bless them and that you would provide for them and help them in their education to reach forward in their lives, to be useful in their careers, but our society as a whole.

We receive our thanks, Lord, we pray, and all we ask is in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Now, we're to the children.

We started last time looking at some of the Bible animals. We took some time looking at Bible birds and last time we looked at the ant. I want to like to say a few words about the lion.

It's going from one extreme to the other, isn't it? We began with one of the tiniest little insects or creatures and now we're coming to one of the big predators, the lion. It's mentioned in the Bible and a number of places in the Bible.

I'm going to read from one of them. It's in the book of Revelation, chapter 5. And here John was given by God to see into heaven and actually here in chapter 5 of Revelation from verse 2, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

[14:08] And the scroll really, for John, was a picture of the book, if you like, that contains the history of the world. And what he's being asked is, who is worthy to open this book, this scroll?

Who is able to take charge of it? Who is himself able to take this book and be in charge of everything that happens in the world and be the king, if you like, over everything that happens? And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

That, of course, is a picture of Jesus. You know what a lion is like in the wild? The lion is the king of beasts. The lion is what naturalists tell us at the top of the food chain, is how they usually proclaim, how they usually describe it.

Being at the top of the food chain means they're not under threat from any other predator. They're the boss. They're the king. Nobody's going to actually win over them, even if they attack them.

[15:19] Even animals like hyenas, traditional enemies of the lion, sometimes you find them attacking, but inevitably they back away when the lion charges. So the lion is the king of beasts.

It's the powerful animal in the animal kingdom, on earth at least. And here John is being told, The lion of the tribe of Judah, this promised saviour, who's now in heaven, he has taken this book.

He is able to take charge of history. And isn't it a wonderful thing that tonight, whatever things are happening in your own life as a child, in our lives as adults, in the wider world, in our country, throughout the whole world, there is one person who is in charge of everything that happens, and that is Jesus.

And you know, Jesus, as this tells us, is able to be in charge of this book and all the events of history right through to the end of the world. Doesn't that really tell you that every single detail of your life, all the things that happen in your life or will yet happen, they are not in any way out of the control of Jesus.

When you put your life into the hands of Jesus, you are actually putting your life into the hands of someone who is well able to control everything for you.

[16:44] And that's why Jesus invites us to come to him, to come to him and to trust in him, to put our lives in his hands. Because when we do that, we're in the hands of the king.

The king is in charge of our lives, as he's in charge of everything else. And you know, he's worthy that we should do this. One of the constant songs that you find in heaven in Revelation, there is, worthy is the lamb who was slain.

He's worthy that we should come and take him as the boss of our lives, as the king of our lives. And in fact, because he's worthy, it's a really serious thing not to give your life to him.

Because when he is so great and so powerful and so majestic and we don't give our life to him, then that's a serious sin on our part.

We're keeping back something from Jesus that is really special to himself. Now, you probably know most of your children, the Chronicles of Narnia, and you'll know that there is a very special lion in the Chronicles of Narnia, Aslan.

[18:01] He's the only one who's mentioned in all the books in the Chronicles of Narnia. And Aslan represents Jesus. Jesus in his power. Jesus in his control.

Jesus that's pictured there in Revelation chapter 5. So tonight, I want to commend you, Jesus, as the king of your life. I want you to think about Jesus as this great lion that's in charge of the whole world.

He not only will guide you and teach you and keep you safe, he'll protect you, he'll lead you, he'll make sure that everything works out in the end for your praise, for your glory, and for his as well.

There's nothing about Jesus that makes him unworthy of our trust. So tonight, again, put your trust in him, take him as the king of your life, and serve him until he takes you home to be with himself.

Let's say the Lord's prayer again together. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[19:16] Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Now, I'd like us to turn back to John chapter 20.

We're continuing our series of studies of questions that God has posed to various people in the Bible that we're taking because the Bible is God's word. We're taking questions now to ourselves as well.

When you come to read the Bible and you find the question that we're dealing with tonight and the ones we've mentioned earlier and dealt with in the previous studies, they're really questions that

God is posing and putting to us.

And we have to answer these questions for ourselves just the way that those people that are mentioned in the Bible questioned and given questions from God have to answer these questions or deal with the things that were in them.

[20 : 17] So tonight, we're looking at this question that Jesus asked of Mary Magdalene. We'll find it in John 20 and at verse 15. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping?

Whom are you seeking? There are two questions really but they're very closely related. Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Well, you don't need me to tell you and it's been obvious before the COVID-19 outbreak that we live in a world of much trauma, of much weeping, people with lives that are shattered and many, many causes of weeping for us as human beings and we mustn't deprecate weeping.

We mustn't think that weeping is wrong. We mustn't think that Christians especially ought never to weep even in times of loss and times of bereavement and times of crisis. We mustn't think that Christians are not allowed to weep or that they shouldn't show their weeping to those around them or in public.

Perhaps this is more appropriate to address to myself and to men who may be listening because sometimes we feel that as men that we're above the idea of weeping in public.

Of course, when you go to the Bible that's not the case at all. Many of the people in the Bible, male and female, like Mary here, were weeping publicly. They weren't ashamed of weeping.

[21 : 47] So it's not wrong for Christians to show their grief. I know we can overdo it and sometimes the Lord will tell us, look, that's going a bit too far. You're just making some sort of overemphasis on the weeping.

But the weeping itself is not wrong. Please remember that. Don't be afraid to show your sorrow through weeping. You never know that's maybe the very thing that someone is going to be helped by.

After all, Jesus, at the grave of Lazarus, or approaching the grave of Lazarus, along with Mary and Martha, his two sisters, sorrowing over the loss of Lazarus, Jesus wept.

And if the Son of God was not ashamed to show his grief and his sorrow publicly by weeping, neither should we be. And there are as many ways, I'm sure, in trying to deal with the trauma that we face in this life that causes our weeping as there are causes themselves.

Many ways in which we try unsuccessfully to deal with our weeping, although we, of course, value every help we can get. And we need all the human sympathy, all the human counselling, as far as it's directed, especially by principles of God's Word.

[23 : 05] We need that, at least in a measure, and we can be helped a lot by that. And we mustn't discount these things as not valid for Christians. but we need something that's greater and greater in power and greater in influence than all the sources of our weeping, than all the things that causes our weeping, and that, of course, includes death itself.

Where death comes into our experience as individuals, as families, the death of others, I mean, especially, and where that causes our weeping, we need something greater than death itself, more stronger than death itself, more powerful than death itself, to enable us to overcome it, or even to benefit from it.

Where will we find that? Where do you find such a thing that is actually greater than death? You find it, as Mary discovered, in the risen Jesus.

In Jesus, risen from the dead, now in glory. And that takes us to our study this evening of Mary and the question that Jesus posed for her.

We'll look at three things. Mary's weeping, Christ's word, and then Mary's welcome after he had spoken and revealed himself to her to be alive.

[24 : 29] So Mary's weeping, first of all. There she was, and she stood weeping outside the tomb. Peter and John, we take it, it was John, they went back to their own homes after they came to believe that Christ, in fact, had risen from the dead from what they saw inside the tomb.

The clothes were folded and some people, you know, maybe are mistaken about this. You'll find some people saying, well, Jesus had got up and he'd folded the clothes and then he left the tomb. It's not like that at all. The clothes were exactly as they were on his dead body. So when he rose from the dead, he rose out of the clothes that he'd had on his body in the grave and that's where he left them.

That's what convinced these disciples that he had risen. They were exactly in the shape, if you like, of his body except fallen flat. And when they saw, they believed, but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

And then she stooped and looked in. She saw these two angels. They asked this question, why are you weeping? She said, they have taken away my Lord. I do not know where they have laid him.

[25 : 34] And then she turned around and saw Jesus. She didn't know who it was at that time. And she, Jesus then asked her this question. Why was Mary, why was she weeping?

What was it that was behind her sorrow? What is she at this time in this situation? Where has she gone wrong? Well, she's looking for a dead Christ.

In verse 13 there, you find that and verse 15, where, sir, if you have carried him away, his dead body, she means, tell me where you've laid him and I will take him away.

When the angels asked her, a reply to the angels was, they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him. She came to the tomb on that day looking for the dead body of Jesus, looking to, to apply to the dead body of Jesus the things that she didn't have time and they didn't have time because he was buried in a hurry in the sepulchre.

The Sabbath day was very close and so, in the previous chapter you have that reference because of the Jewish Sabbath day, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

[26 : 45] They didn't have time to go through the usual preparations for a dead body and so, she came expecting to find, looking for the dead Christ. She did not expect to find Jesus was now alive, that he was no longer dead.

And you can see that from the words that she said to him, supposing him to be the gardener, she said, Sarah, if you have carried him away, you have taken this body of Jesus away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.

I will attend to it. I will deal with it. She was looking for a dead Christ. And sadly, for so many people in their sorrow, for so many people in the world today, with all the sorrow that's in the world, with all the trauma that causes all of this sorrow and sadness, they don't actually look to a living Christ to help them with that sorrow.

For most people, for many people at least, Christ is no longer alive. Even if they believe that he was a famous figure at one time, where is he now? He's dead. He's gone.

There's no point in looking to Jesus. Why would you look to Jesus? People will say it means nothing. And his death means nothing to them. It was just the death of someone who was significant in his own generation.

[28 : 07] But they will say, well, I can't possibly believe that this person, this person through this death, is one that God provided as an answer to my problems, an answer to my sin especially.

He's a figure of history, but he's long since gone. There's no point in looking to Jesus. Most of the world will tell you tonight. How sad is that? How sad is that when we know as Christians that there is no help like the help that Jesus gave us?

And that the help we most need in our weeping, the peace that we most need to know in our hearts, the comfort that we most need to experience in our minds and our hearts, is the comfort that comes from the risen Jesus.

Not just in knowing that he died and why he died, not just being able to relate that to ourselves and to others around us and why the cross is as it is in theology and the Christian faith.

Our peace and our comfort comes from himself as now risen from the dead, from the one who has conquered death. Here is Mary looking into this tomb and there she finds two angels and that tomb, despite the fact that there were two angels and it couldn't help her without weeping, it couldn't provide for an answer to a problem.

[29 : 28] Whatever it is short of Jesus we seek to use and however useful in their own way they might be to really bring us the comfort, to bring us the understanding and to bring us even the benefit that Christ is able to give us from our times of weeping.

Nothing can do that for us and no one can do that for us like or as much as or in the way as Jesus himself. You might be weeping tonight in your soul.

You might have a source of sorrow that nobody else knows of. That might be something in your own life privately that's causing you that distress. Maybe you've lost loved ones recently.

Maybe it's something people do know about but in your heart of hearts you're longing for peace, you're longing for something that will meaningfully address this deep emotional pain that you have.

And who knows it may be something that is completely different to anything I've mentioned. And I'm sure for most if not all of us tonight there's something in our lives or has been in our lives that has caused us to weep and the memory of it perhaps still makes us weep.

[30 : 45] What do we do with that? Where do we go with that? Do we simply look towards the teaching of the Bible without coming to the living Jesus himself?

Do we look into the tomb of Jesus and find evidence that he died and rose again but not actually come to meet with himself personally? Here is Mary's weeping.

Here is a weeping that's representative if you like of so much that's in the world. She's looking for a dead Christ and many people in the world in their weeping don't understand that Christ is not dead. So tonight what's causing your weeping whatever it is doesn't really matter. As we said to the children here is one who is now standing not just beyond death but above death.

That's what makes the difference. He's not just gone to the other side of death through his resurrection and ascension to glory. He is standing above death. He has the scroll in his hand of the whole history of the world and your tiny life and my tiny life within it.

[31 : 54] But we matter to him. We're in that book. We're in that scroll. And he regulates our lives as we give them to him so that our weeping is addressed by his risen power by the grandeur of his person.

And that's where we come to next Christ's word. Here's Mary weeping and here's Jesus saying woman why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Of course Jesus knew very well why she was weeping.

Every time you come to these questions in the Bible these questions we're addressing and others we won't be addressing but when God asks a question of anyone in the scriptures it's not because he doesn't know the answer himself.

We've seen that already with the woman we saw last time who had the hemorrhage of blood. There she was she touched the hem of Christ's garment she was instantly healed and he turned around and he said who touched me?

It wasn't to make her feel embarrassed it wasn't actually to try and just show her up in the face of the crowd that was all around her it was so that she would come to know something more of himself to be comforted to be assured to be addressed to be taught.

[33 : 09] That's why he's dealing with this woman in this way. That's why the questions of the Bible as they address our hearts and our minds they're not there just to bring us to a sense of being convicted of our sin and leaving it at that to make us feel bad to make us feel embarrassed because they're there so that we'll come to God and that we'll come to know God the living Christ in our lives.

So he's speaking you see into her grief. Here she was and here she comes to be confronted with this question from this man that she doesn't know yet as Jesus Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? He's speaking into the grief of this woman of Mary. He knew the reason for it and he's concerned to meet her grief with the truth of his resurrection.

What a wonderful point that is. Let me just say it again he is concerned to meet her grief with the truth of his resurrection with the fact of his resurrection with the truth of his resurrection.

She's going to come to know as you and I must come to know that knowing the risen Jesus is the source of our comfort is the source of our joy is the source of our peace and it's essential in all our we beings that we know this risen Jesus for ourselves.

[34 : 35] He has triumphed over death. He's conquered death. It's beneath his feet. He will never be subject to death again. He's the king of death.

He has death in his mighty hand. He has all the reasons why death came about dealt with and answered our sin especially. He is the master of every cause of our weeping.

Whether it's death or something else Jesus is the master of it. Jesus has his hand on everything that's going on. He's the master of everything that causes us pain.

that means he is able to sanctify our sorrows. Now this is a very important point in the Bible itself because the Bible encourages us to not be what you might call stoic or just steeled in ourselves against trauma against the sources of our sorrow and our pains.

we can do that. We can just steel ourselves against them and say I'm not going to yield to this. I'm not going to give in to this. I'm just going to carry on with life. I'm going to try and just punch through this and move on with my life.

[35 : 55] But you see what Jesus does is far more than that. He sanctifies your sorrow to you. He makes you benefit from the sorrow when he teaches you something of its meaning something of its purpose.

sorrows. That's what Paul understood so well and who actually experienced as many sorrows in his life as many sources of trauma as he did.

You'll find it all through his letters and you find him saying to the Corinthians our light affliction he's just given a list of all the things that caused him so much sorrow so much pain so much disappointment so much trauma our light affliction how can he call this light affliction when you think of the persecutions he's been describing how is he calling it light because he's looking at it in the balances of life against something else on the other side of the balance and as he puts this affliction on one side and the weight of glory that Jesus has procured for him on the other side the balance tips towards the weight of glory and he says our light affliction which is momentary is working for us a far more eternal exceeding eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen but the things which are unseen you're looking beyond lockdown you're looking beyond time you're looking beyond the history of the world you're looking beyond the page when

Christ closes the scroll and says that's it that's the end of history what now well it's King Jesus in his kingdom the things that his people always looked forward to and that's what where Jesus brings you when you bring your weeping to him he sanctifies and is able to sanctify all your sorrow to bless them to you I remember talking to someone many years ago now who had been lying in hospital for many many weeks with a broken back he'd been knocked down on a bicycle or a car he was carried into hospital and had spent a long time on his back there and as he was leaving the hospital he told me as he was leaving he said to the nursing staff there he said you know I was really in terrible pain for a lot of this time but you know if I could just get the same presence of the Lord and blessing of the Lord for all of these weeks I would easily go through it again what he's saying is that God sanctified his affliction to him he sanctified the pain to him he sanctified the sorrow of it to him he revealed his presence as he did to Mary here and assured him as he assures her as we'll see in a moment that actually he is able to handle this and he is able to deal with her life now as it goes on as there isn't

Jesus in charge of her life and see that's why it enables us to see to look beyond the weeping to look beyond what presently causes her grief many people I know will say not to any of the listeners I hope but many people will say to you when you speak in those sort of ways to people about your faith and about what Jesus means to you and they will say well I know however much there may be in this life of weeping for me I know what lies beyond I know there's heaven I know there's Jesus waiting for me in heaven people will say that's just religion that's a figment of your imagination that's just something that you're using as a crutch something you're using to try and bring some measure of comfort into your pain well of course it's not because you know that Jesus who's ministering peace to your soul is real is risen is in charge of everything including your sorrow as psalm 30 put it weeping may endure for a night but joy comes with the morning sometimes the night may feel long even the night literally of a one day and when you think of the night and its spiritual dimension in the life of a

[40 : 11] Christian the whole life of some Christians may well just amount to a night time of trauma of sorrow of weeping they maybe go through life and think they're never getting out of this that life is just this from beginning to end well it may well be for some and I don't want to in any way speak lightly of that or think they're being deluded but joy comes with the morning doesn't matter what the sorrow is it doesn't matter how long it goes on for it doesn't matter how deeply it hurts if Jesus is in charge of it the morning brings it to an end because that's what revelation describes chapter 21 that wonderful place that heaven that city that has foundations of which God is the builder and maker where there is no night where there is no pain where there is no sorrow where there is no death nothing shall enter into that causes any of that the trauma is left behind and here

Mary is being assured by Jesus that this is what she must do and then he doesn't just ask the question thereby giving her the opportunity to see who he is then he says Mary and in the context of this wonderfully emotional passage in many ways because you know as you read it that she doesn't yet know Jesus is risen from the dead you know he is as you read it that's what makes the whole thing so fascinating so powerful for you but Jesus said to her Mary and what I said he's speaking into her grief speaking into her sorrow speaking into her weeping and now he adds this wonderful touch Mary her own personal name what what what what he's revealing himself to her he's

revealing to her who he is he's revealing to her the fact that he's not the gardener that he's not the person in charge of the place who's keeping it tidy that he's the risen saviour that he's the Jesus she knew that went to the cross for her that she knew while he lived in this world before the crucifixion and now he's showing her by saying this name so wonderfully and tenderly and with such a personal interest in her and speaking her name in a way that nobody else could Mary he's actually pronouncing her name so personally so tenderly that in that he's revealing himself to her and you know that's where your comfort lies your comfort lies in Jesus revealing himself to you as he now does through his word through the work of his spirit in your heart your soul is comforted as Jesus reveals himself to you but not just reveals himself to you as a person but reveals himself to you as the conqueror of death what you really want above everything else in this world whatever you want assurance of you want assurance that death is not going to overwhelm you that death is not going to swallow you up that death as your last enemy is going to have the last say in your experience and it's not because when

Jesus speaks your name into your soul he is assuring you that he is the last word that he is the conqueror of death and that as the conqueror of death you need not be afraid of anything the future holds you need not be afraid of anything that causes your weeping however traumatic it might be at times so there's Christ's word answering Mary's weeping and isn't that our concern tonight and our concern surely at all times though we never of course I certainly never consistently look at things this way as I should do but here is the way in which we must confront our weeping with the word of Christ and with the word that comes from him as the living Christ the risen Christ and as you read his word pray that he will speak into your soul that he will speak through his spirit into your suffering into your trauma into your weeping pray that he will sanctify that to you and especially that he will reveal himself

I'm with you even in the valley of the shadow of death you don't need to feel any evil because my rod and my staff will comfort you I'll be with you I won't leave you on this side of death I'll go through it I'll take you to the other side I've gone there already for you here is Jesus the word of Christ and thirdly finally there's Mary's welcome now you see the thing has changed for her completely she came here looking for the dead body of Christ and now she knows this person that I took to be the gardener it's actually Jesus it's the saviour I knew but he's now risen from the dead and so she says Rabboni there's an exclamation mark in this translation very rightly because this is an exclamation she's come to put yourself as far as you can in her shoes at that moment there she was coming weeping looking for the dead body of

[46 : 05] Jesus the Jesus she loved mourning at the fact that he had died that he was no longer alive and here he comes to reveal himself to a Rabboni literally my master whether you emphasize the word my or the word master or teacher it really brings this wonderful emphasis and excitement on her part the realization that he's alive that it's him it's himself it's not a phantom it's not something I'm imagining it's him he's there he's my teacher my personal teacher that's how he is surely for you tonight as well isn't that really the instruction that you want to go on in your life instruction from the risen Jesus through his spirit into your soul and isn't this also the prospect for

Mary and this is the prospect for you and for me even if you're in the midst of weeping right now when you can say my teacher to Jesus you're anticipating that he will teach you further that he will lead you into further avenues of instruction as your saviour as your personal teacher as if there was nobody else to be taught but yourself but she needs to learn something immediately she needs to learn that she cannot keep Jesus with her the way that she once knew him to be with her physically as he was before his death you see what he says to her as soon as she said rabboni my master my teacher do not cling to me for I have not yet ascended to the father they had been teaching the disciples John's gospel especially chapters 14 15 16 that it was necessary for him to go away that he would go back to the father who sent him into this world that it would be advantageous to them because he would send the spirit and that he would be present through the spirit in a wonderful way that's what

Mary needs to learn how gently he dealt with her do not cling to me the old translation said do not touch me which wasn't a good translation it led to all of course she wanted Jesus to remain with her to be with her to be her teacher beside her and she would follow him as she did before his death no he says that's no longer possible but I've got something better for you I'll be present through the Holy Spirit in your heart I'll be present as I promised once I've gone to heaven I will send the comforter the teacher the instructor it's the same Jesus who's present with us tonight a different

mode or method of being present with us compared to his physical presence previously but it's the same power of the same person now risen over death and ministering to us by his spirit what a wonderful privilege we have what an amazing gift he's given to his people to have the holy spirit through whom he's present with them to instruct them to guide them to deal with their weeping she came weeping looking for the dead body of

Jesus she left this place rejoicing in the living person of Jesus what a day in the life of Mary what a difference between her morning and her evening and I hope for you too however it was you began this service I hope that you're ending it by rejoicing in the living person of Christ as your teacher as your saviour as your redeemer or as Thomas put it my Lord and my God let's pray oh father in heaven we do give thanks that you sent your son into this world to die the death of the cross we thank you oh lord that you are now risen from the dead that you have been raised to the father's side and to the glory that was promised you before you came to die we thank you tonight for your presence with your people we pray oh lord that we may treasure that presence that we may not grieve your spirit in the ways in which your word tells us is so possible for us lord we ask that you would abide with us that you would continue to teach us and that you would lift your own hands over us on a daily basis and constantly that we may be under your blessing at all times sanctify us lord in all the experiences of life sanctify these to us even our sorrows so that we may benefit from them through your blessing receive us now we pray and pardon our sin for christ's sake amen we're going to conclude tonight by singing from psalm number 30 in the scottish altar that's page 239 if you're using the blue books psalm number 30 from the beginning verses 1 to 5 we've quoted verse 5 already so we'll take the singing down as far as verse 5 lord i will thee extol for thou hast lifted me on high and over me thou to rejoice made not mine enemy for thou who art the lord my god i in distress to thee with loud cries lifted up my voice thou hast healed me these verses lord i will thee extol lord i will thee extol for thou hast lifted me on me on high and over me thou to rejoice midst not mine enemy o thou thou who art the lord my god i in distress to thee with loud cries lifted up my voice and thou hast healed me o lord my soul thou hast brought up and rescued from the grave that I to paid should not go down alive thou didst me save o ye that are his holy ones sing praise unto the lord and give unto him thanks when his holiness record for but a moment lasts his wrath life in his favor lies weeping may fall a night endured at morn doth joy arise now may the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and ever more amen once again let me just thank you for joining in the service with us this evening i trust you've had a good day and that you will know god's blessing and his keeping of you safe and well in this coming week and whatever source of problems or sorrows we have may we know the power of the risen

[55 : 34] Jesus through his spirit working through and in our lives to his glory thank you you