



John 20, English Standard Version (ESV)

The Resurrection

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”³ So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there,⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus^[a] head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that

it was Jesus. ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

A Lot Can Change In Just A Short Time

Mary Magdalene woke up from what was likely a fitful sleep before the sunrise that first Easter morning, if she even slept at all. Her world had suddenly become a very dark place. As she emerged from the house before dawn, she was mourning the death of her very dear friend and rabbi, Jesus. The man who had, in essence, and in substance, handed her very life back to her. Jesus had loved her when she deemed herself unlovable. He had given her a new identity that had nothing to do with her checkered past but had everything to do with who He said she was. She took great joy in following Him and learning about forgiveness, love, and God's will for her life. She had even believed Jesus' claims that He was the long-awaited messiah. Now He was dead, and it felt like a huge piece of her life had died with Him. She wasn't just in mourning for Jesus, but she was also mourned new dreams, identity, and mission that she was just getting comfortable believing in. But now those things had died with Jesus. They all might as well have been wrapped up in grave clothes and shut tightly behind the massive stone that darkened the entrance to the tomb.

Life has a not-so-funny way of turning upside down without any warning. Have you ever found yourself mourning the "death" of a dream? Have you ever had someone or even something you love taken from you unexpectedly? Has your life ever changed so drastically that you are left reeling, asking God "What is happening? Are you still there? Are you still in charge? Are you still good? Do you still love me?" As Mary wept outside the tomb that morning, we are told that two angels asked her, "Why are you weeping?". Her response to them was, "I don't know where Jesus is." She was confused and heartbroken because she couldn't see Jesus.

This Easter morning we gather together worldwide as the Church, yet we are separated from our brothers and sisters in Christ by a virus and shelter-in-place orders from our government. Many of us are undoubtedly experiencing confusion and heartbreak over the "death" of significant things in our lives. Many of us are certainly mourning at the loss

of these beloved dreams, relationships, traditions, or even people. We may feel very much like Mary wandering through the darkness of pre-dawn looking for Jesus.

And then it happens. Jesus does what only Jesus can do. He slowly reveals Himself. Mary turns around and sees Him. She doesn't recognize Him immediately. Jesus asks her, "Why are you mourning? Who are you hoping to find here?". In her honesty and anguish, Mary explains to Jesus who she is looking for and asks Him if He knows where He is? Can't you imagine the sun starting to rise over the horizon right at that moment? The first rays of light are illuminating the tomb, empty apart from Mary in the doorway and this man looking at her with a compassionate, knowing, loving gaze. And then He speaks her name. "Mary," Jesus says. With that one word, life is breathed back into this woman. Light dawns on those dark places she has been dwelling in for the past several days. Her heart skips a beat as she realizes that Jesus is not only here, but He is alive! Mary begins to understand that death is not the end for those who know Jesus! She instantly remembers the times that Jesus, a little slyly, hinted at this amazing truth. The truth that He is in the business of resurrecting dreams, relationships, purposes, and lives that, until very recently, have been dead! A lot can happen in just a short time.

This morning, listen to Jesus lovingly say your name as you stand in the doorway of the tomb. The sun is coming up over the horizon. You have been standing in the dark asking the question, "Where are you?". This Easter morning, Jesus' message to us is this: [Insert your name or family's names here]_____, even when life is at its darkest, I love you, I am here, I have not and will not leave you. I have conquered death and I have a purpose for your life. I am alive. I am all about reviving dead things for my Father's glory!

Mary left the tomb that morning full of joy and with the knowledge that once again in just a short moment of time everything had changed. This time for good, forever!

He is risen!

Lord Jesus,

We come before you this morning to praise your name. Thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross which paid the price for our sin. We praise you for your power over death seen in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Lord, as we come before you early on this Easter morning, there are places in our lives that feel dark and we need your light.

Remind us and encourage our hearts in the truth that you are a God who is present in the darkness and the light. Remind us that you are God who makes the old new and makes beauty from ashes. Remind us of your love, your nearness and that you never leave us nor forsake us.

Thank you, Jesus, for your peace and joy. We worship and celebrate you and your mighty works today and always.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.