

"I Have Seen the Lord!"

Thomas Robinson, September 19, 2010

John 20:1, 11-22

¹ Early on the **first day of the week**, while it was still dark, **Mary Magdalene** went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ...

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to **look into the tomb** ¹² and saw **two angels** in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "**Woman, why are you crying?**"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, **"and I don't know where they have put him."**

¹⁴ At this, she turned around and **saw Jesus** standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, "**Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?**"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "**Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.**"

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "**Mary.**"

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "**Rabboni!**" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "**Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'**"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to **the disciples** with the news: "**I have seen the Lord!**" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

¹⁹ On the evening of that **first day of the week**, when the disciples were together, with the **doors locked** for fear of the Jewish leaders, **Jesus came** and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**"²⁰ After he said this, he **showed them his hands and side**. The disciples were **overjoyed** when they **saw the Lord**.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "**Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**"²² And with that he **breathed on them** and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**"

Mary Seeks Jesus' Body

John 20 is helping us to enter the unique situation of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Yes, Jesus had tried to prepare them, but the event was so unprecedented and so important in its meaning, that John emphasizes how difficult it was to grasp the truth.

Early Sunday, Mary Magdalene found the tomb empty and told Peter and the Beloved Disciple, "*They've taken the Lord....*" They ran to the tomb, but nothing made sense. The body's wrappings were there, but the body gone. Who would have done that? They didn't understand, but gave up looking for Jesus' body and went home.

Mary stays. She won't give up till she finds the body of the one who changed her life. She is grief-stricken at her loss: sorrow, disappointment, loneliness, dashed hopes. She stays outside, searching, crying. Perhaps frustrated that Peter and B.D. left. She "knows" what must have happened and fits all that she sees into that picture. She sees two people in the tomb; she sees Jesus himself, but she doesn't see them.

"*Why are you crying?*" "*Who is it you are looking for?*" Both strange questions outside a tomb. Mary later surely thought about those questions. She thought she knew what was possible, what death meant. She was realistic, faithful, persistent, loving. But she would never find Jesus by a tearful search for his body—reality had changed.

Jesus Finds Mary

Jesus was there. Gardener of the garden tomb. "*Sir, if you have carried him away...*" Jesus had indeed removed the body, but Mary can't find and retrieve a dead Jesus.

The living Jesus must find Mary. Call her. Break through the dense fog of the old reality so that she can enter the new reality and see what / who is right in front of her. Faith is never possible without God's initiative. We are always looking for the wrong thing: a Jesus that fits in our old world, a helpful teacher, past but respected, usable. Jesus comes as Living Lord calling our name, showing us reality we've never seen.

Don't Cling to Me ... Yet

Mary begins to step across into that new reality. Jesus is back, strong. Death defeated. "Rabboni!" Jesus' work will continue like before! She embraces him, ready to follow. But things are not like before. Don't hold on. I've not yet ascended. "Not yet?" After I ascend, when I'm present with you, living in you, then you can hold on for life.

Mary the Chosen Emissary

Jesus could have appeared to Peter or the Beloved Disciple first, but he chose Mary (and other women) and sent her to the disciples. No one in the ancient world would have picked a former demon-possessed woman as the first witness—except Jesus. This remarkable woman is the first to be able to say: "*I have seen the Lord!*"

He sends her not to "deniers," cowards, and doubters but to "my brothers." Mary knows Jesus means his disciples. Jesus is calling them into the Family of God – new reality. None of them had a place in their world for what had happened: a crucified Messiah; resurrection in the middle of ongoing history, a human who is living Lord and God.

Peace, Purpose, Presence, Power

Jesus comes to them behind locked doors. Very physical and yet different. Wounds. He gives them new Peace. He gives them his mission. He gives them the Holy Spirit.