

Week 3 The Power of His Resurrection/ "Who Are You Looking For?"

April 19, 2025

Opening Monologue

Happy Resurrection Sunday to you and your families. I pray this Holy Season brings joy to your homes and hearts as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"Who are you looking for?" is the title of this week's sermon.

"It's early Sunday morning, just before dawn in Jerusalem. The air is cool, and a somber quiet hangs over the city after the chaos of the crucifixion two days prior. Jesus, the teacher and miracle worker, was brutally executed on a Roman cross. His body was laid in a borrowed tomb, sealed by a massive stone and guarded by Roman soldiers. Jesus' followers were devastated, fearful, and confused. They are hiding, grappling with grief and shattered hopes and dreams." (1)

Two women got up early Sunday morning to visit the tomb where Jesus was laid. With great courage, yet broken in spirit, they reached the grave, but Jesus was nowhere to be found—the tomb was empty! The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Now go quickly and tell the other disciples." (Matt. 28:5-7)

Put yourself in their shoes. Can you even imagine the shock, awe, and amazement that news brought to their lives? You mean to tell me Jesus is alive?!

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went and told the disciples, who hurried to the tomb, saw, and believed themselves, but Jesus had not yet been physically spotted. So, the disciples went home, but Mary Magdalene stayed at the grave.

As Mary is weeping and trying to wrap her mind around what just happened, Jesus appears and says, “Why are you crying? Who is it you’re looking for?” (John 20:15)

Join us on Resurrection Sunday as we unpack this supernatural story. The truth is, when we find Jesus, our lives are never the same again.

He is Risen,
Rev. Brad Standfest

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Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Texts

Matthew 28: 1-8

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028%3A%201-8&version=NIV>

John 20: 3-17

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2020%3A%203-17&version=NIV>

The Power of His Resurrection Thoughts:

What Jesus Did for Mary Magdalene According to the Gospels

The primary action attributed to Jesus concerning Mary Magdalene in the Gospels is his act of **casting out seven demons from her**. This is explicitly mentioned in **Luke 8:1-3 and Mark 16:9** (though Mark 16:9 is part of the longer ending of Mark, which some scholars consider a later addition). Beyond this, the Gospels depict Mary Magdalene as a devoted follower who supported Jesus’ ministry, was present at his crucifixion, and played a pivotal role as a witness to his resurrection. Let’s break this down by Gospel references:

1. Casting Out Seven Demons (Luke 8:1-3, Mark 16:9)

Luke 8:1-3:

“Soon afterward he [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had been cast out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.”

Key Details:

- Jesus healed Mary Magdalene by casting out “seven demons,” indicating a significant spiritual or physical affliction. The number “seven” in biblical literature often symbolizes completeness or severity, suggesting her condition was profound.
- The text does not elaborate on the nature of these demons (e.g., whether they caused physical illness, mental distress, or spiritual oppression), as demon possession in the Gospels is described variably (e.g., epilepsy-like symptoms in Mark 9:17-27 or muteness in Matthew 9:32-33).
- After her healing, Mary Magdalene became part of a group of women who followed Jesus and supported his ministry financially or logistically, indicating a transformation from affliction to active participation in his mission.

Mark 16:9 (Longer Ending):

“Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.”

Key Details:

- This verse reaffirms the exorcism and highlights Mary Magdalene’s privileged role as the first to encounter the resurrected Jesus (though this detail aligns with John 20:11-18).
- The repetition of the exorcism detail underscores its importance to her identity in the early Christian narrative.

2. Inclusion in Jesus’ Ministry (Luke 8:1-3)

- The Gospel of Luke notes that Mary Magdalene, along with other women, traveled with Jesus and the twelve disciples, supporting them

“out of their means.” This suggests:

- Jesus accepted her as a follower, which was culturally significant in a patriarchal society where women typically had limited public roles.
- Her inclusion implies trust and a restored social or spiritual status, as demon possession could have marginalized her (e.g., the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5:1–20 was isolated before Jesus healed him).
- Her financial support indicates she may have had some means or resources, possibly from her hometown, Magdala, a prosperous fishing town on the Sea of Galilee.

3. Presence at the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:55–56, Mark 15:40–41, Luke 23:49, John 19:25)

All four Gospels place Mary Magdalene at the crucifixion, emphasizing her loyalty and courage:

- **Matthew 27:55–56:** “There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.”
- **Mark 15:40–41:** “There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome, who, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered to him, and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.”
- **Luke 23:49:** “And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance, watching these things.”
- **John 19:25:** “But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”

Key Details:

- Mary Magdalene’s presence at the crucifixion - Unlike many male disciples who fled (e.g., Peter’s denial in Mark 14:66–72), Mary Magdalene remained with Jesus during his execution, showing her devotion.
- John’s Gospel places her closer to the cross, highlighting her prominence among the women.

4. Witness to the Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-10, John 20:1-18)

Mary Magdalene is a central figure in the resurrection narratives, particularly in John's Gospel:

- **Matthew 28:1-10:** Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” visit the tomb, encounter an angel who announces Jesus’ resurrection, and then meet the risen Jesus, who instructs them to tell the disciples.
- **Mark 16:1-8:** Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome go to anoint Jesus’ body, find the tomb empty, and are told by a young man (angel) to inform the disciples, though they initially flee in fear.
- **Luke 24:1-10:** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others find the tomb empty and are told by two angels that Jesus is risen. They report this to the disciples, who initially disbelieve.

• John 20:1-18:

“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... Mary stood weeping outside the tomb... She turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus... 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.”

Key Details:

- Mary Magdalene is the first to discover the empty tomb in John and the first to see the risen Jesus, a role that earned her the title “Apostle to the Apostles” in later Christian tradition.
- Her encounter with Jesus in John 20 is deeply personal; Jesus calls her by name, indicating a restored relationship and affirming her role as a witness.
- Her announcement to the disciples is a pivotal moment, though

their initial skepticism (Luke 24:11) reflects the cultural bias against women's testimony in first-century Judaism.

Impact on Mary Magdalene's Life

The Gospels provide limited direct information about Mary Magdalene's inner life or long-term impact, but we can infer several transformative effects based on her actions and role after Jesus' intervention:

1. Spiritual and Physical Restoration:

The exorcism of seven demons likely freed Mary Magdalene from severe conditions whether physical, psychological, or spiritual. This healing restored her to a state where she could live independently, contribute to Jesus' ministry, and engage socially, as demon possession often led to ostracism (e.g., Mark 5:15).

- The healing marked a turning point, transitioning her from affliction to active discipleship.

2. Purpose and Community:

- Mary Magdalene's inclusion in Jesus' traveling group gave her a new purpose and community. As a financial supporter (Luke 8:3), she played a practical role in the ministry, suggesting empowerment and agency uncommon for women in her cultural context.

- Her presence alongside other women (Joanna, Susanna) indicates she found a supportive network, contrasting with the potential isolation of her pre-healing life.

3. Devotion and Courage:

- Her steadfast presence at the crucifixion, when many disciples fled, reflects a profound loyalty to Jesus, likely rooted in gratitude for her healing and the transformative message of his teachings.
- Her willingness to visit the tomb (despite potential danger or ritual impurity concerns) and her role as a resurrection witness demonstrate courage and faith.

4. Role as a Witness and Proclaimer:

- Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Jesus, especially in John

20, elevated her status in the early Christian community. Her announcement, “I have seen the Lord,” positioned her as a foundational witness to the resurrection, a core tenet of Christian faith.

- The Gospels’ emphasis on her role, despite cultural biases against women’s testimony, underscores the radical inclusivity of Jesus’ ministry and its impact on her identity as a disciple.

5. Legacy in Early Christianity:

- While the Gospels do not detail her life post-resurrection, her prominence suggests she held a respected place in the early church. Later traditions (e.g., the Gospel of Mary, a non-canonical text) portray her as a leader, though these are not historically reliable.
- Her title as “Apostle to the Apostles” in later theology reflects the enduring impact of her resurrection testimony.

Contextual Analysis and Theological Significance

To understand the impact on Mary Magdalene, it’s helpful to consider the broader context of Jesus’ ministry and the cultural setting:

1. Cultural Context:

- In first-century Judaism, women had limited public roles, and their testimony was often deemed less credible (e.g., Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.15). Jesus’ acceptance of women like Mary Magdalene as followers and witnesses was countercultural, reflecting his teachings on the kingdom of God as inclusive (e.g., Galatians 3:28, though not in the Gospels).
- Demon possession was stigmatized, and Mary Magdalene’s healing likely restored her social standing, enabling her to contribute materially and spiritually to Jesus’ mission.

2. Theological Implications:

- Mary Magdalene’s healing aligns with Jesus’ broader mission to liberate the oppressed (Luke 4:18–19). Her transformation from demon-possessed to disciple exemplifies the restorative power of God’s kingdom.
- Her role in the resurrection narratives underscores the theme of God choosing the marginalized (1 Corinthians 1:27–28) to reveal divine

truth, as her testimony became foundational to the early church.

3. Misconceptions and Later Traditions:

- The Gospels do not identify Mary Magdalene as a prostitute or the sinful woman of Luke 7:36–50, a conflation that began with Pope Gregory I's sermon in 591 CE. This misidentification overshadowed her role as a healed disciple and resurrection witness.
- Non-canonical texts (e.g., Gospel of Mary) portray her as a visionary leader, but these are later (2nd–3rd century) and not historically reliable compared to the Gospels, which date closer to the events (ca. 70–100 CE).

Breakdown by Gospel

Here's a summary of Mary Magdalene's appearances and their implications:

Gospel Reference- What Jesus Did- Impact on Mary Magdalene

Luke 8:1–3– Cast out seven demons; included her in his ministry—
Restored her health; gave her purpose as a supporter of the ministry

Matthew 27:55–56, 28:1–10— Allowed her to follow and witness
crucifixion and resurrection— Affirmed her loyalty; entrusted her with
resurrection message

Mark 15:40–41, 16:1–8, 16:9— Allowed her to follow; cast out demons;
appeared to her first— Reinforced her transformation and role as a
witness

John 19:25, 20:1–18— Stood by her at the cross; appeared to her first,
calling her by name— Deepened her personal relationship with Jesus;
made her a primary resurrection witness

Biblical conclusion to these facts

Jesus' primary act for Mary Magdalene was casting out seven demons, which liberated her from a severe affliction and enabled her to become a devoted follower, financial supporter, and key witness to his

crucifixion and resurrection. This transformation had a profound impact on her life, restoring her physically and spiritually, giving her purpose within a new community, and elevating her to a central role in the resurrection narrative, particularly in John's Gospel. Her courage, loyalty, and testimony reflect the transformative power of Jesus' ministry, which embraced the marginalized and empowered them to proclaim God's kingdom. The Gospels present her as a model of discipleship, whose life was radically changed by Jesus' intervention, making her a pivotal figure in early Christianity despite cultural barriers. (1)

What were the other Disciples doing post resurrection

The New Testament provides limited details about what Jesus' inner circle of disciples (e.g., Peter, John, James, etc.) were doing on the morning of the resurrection, as the focus is primarily on the women, including Mary Magdalene and Mary (often identified as the mother of James or Mary of Clopas), who went to the tomb early. However, piecing together the accounts from the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and early Christian tradition, we can infer the following:

- **General Context:** After Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples were likely in a state of fear, grief, and confusion. John 20:19 notes that on the evening of the resurrection, the disciples (excluding Thomas) were gathered behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews," suggesting they were hiding from potential persecution by Jewish or Roman authorities.

- **Specific Activities on Resurrection Morning:**

- Not at the Tomb:** The Gospels consistently state that the women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and others, depending on the account) went to the tomb at dawn to anoint Jesus' body with spices (Mark 16:1-2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1). None of the male disciples from the inner circle (Peter, John, etc.) are mentioned as accompanying them initially.

- Likely in Jerusalem:** The disciples were probably still in or near Jerusalem, as they had been for the Passover and crucifixion. Luke 24:13 mentions two lesser disciples (Cleopas and another) walking to Emmaus later that day, but the inner circle's location isn't specified until later.

- Peter and John's Response:** In John 20:2-10, after Mary

Magdalene reports the empty tomb to the disciples, Peter and John (the “beloved disciple”) run to the tomb to investigate. This implies they were nearby, possibly in a house where they had gathered after the crucifixion, but not actively seeking the tomb until Mary’s report.

- **Inferred Activities:**

-Grieving or Hiding: Given the trauma of Jesus’ death, the disciples were likely mourning or lying low. Matthew 26:56 notes they fled at Jesus’ arrest, and their absence at the crucifixion (except possibly John, per John 19:26-27) suggests fear or despair.

-Unaware of Resurrection: The Gospels indicate the disciples did not expect the resurrection. Luke 24:11 says they initially dismissed the women’s report of the empty tomb as “nonsense,” suggesting they were not anticipating or seeking Jesus that morning.

-Scattered or Regrouping: Some scholars suggest the disciples may have been scattered after the crucifixion, with some, like Peter, possibly wrestling with personal guilt (e.g., after denying Jesus, Luke 22:61-62). However, John 20:2 implies at least some were together when Mary Magdalene found them.

- **Why Not at the Tomb?:**

-Cultural Roles: In 1st-century Jewish practice, women often prepared bodies for burial, which may explain why the women went to anoint Jesus’ body while the men did not.

-Fear of Authorities: The male disciples, as prominent followers, may have faced greater risk of arrest, keeping them away from the tomb.

-Lack of Expectation: Unlike the women, who went to perform a burial ritual, the men may not have seen a reason to visit the tomb, especially if they believed Jesus’ mission had ended.

- **Limitations of Sources:** The Gospels are theological narratives, not detailed historical logs, so they don’t provide a comprehensive account of every disciple’s actions. Non-canonical texts (e.g., Gospel of Peter) and later traditions add little clarity about the inner circle’s morning activities. Secular sources (e.g., Josephus) are silent on these events. (1)

Commentary: Digging Deeper into the Main Text

JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD / Matthew 28:1-7

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central fact of Christian history. On it, the church is built; without it, there would be no Christian church today. Jesus' resurrection is unique. Other religions have strong ethical systems, concepts about paradise and afterlife, and various holy scriptures. Only Christianity has a God who became human, literally died for his people, and was raised again in power and glory to rule his church forever.

Why is the Resurrection so important?

- Because Christ was raised from the dead, we know that the kingdom of heaven has broken into earth's history. Our world is now headed for redemption, not disaster. God's mighty power is at work destroying sin, creating new lives, and preparing us for Jesus' second coming.
- Because of the Resurrection, we know that death has been conquered and that we, too, will be raised from the dead to live forever with Christ.
- The Resurrection gives authority to the church's witness in the world. Look at the early evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts: The apostles' most important message was the proclamation that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead!
- The Resurrection gives meaning to the church's regular feast, the Lord's Supper. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we break bread with our risen Lord.
- The Resurrection helps us find meaning even in great tragedy. No matter what happens to us as we walk with the Lord, the Resurrection gives us hope for the future.
- The Resurrection assures us that Christ is alive and ruling his kingdom. He is not legend; he is alive and real.
- The power of God that brought Christ's body back from the dead is available to us to bring our morally and spiritually dead selves back to life so that we can change and grow (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

Christians can look very different from one another, and they can hold widely varying beliefs about politics, lifestyle, and even theology. But

one central belief unites and inspires all true Christians—Jesus Christ rose from the dead!

28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. The women could not make the trip to the tomb until after the Sabbath. As dawn approached, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. Both of them had been at Jesus' cross and had followed Joseph so they would know where the tomb was located (27:56, 61). Mark also mentioned that Salome was with them; she had also been at the cross and was probably the mother of the disciples James and John. The women went home and kept the Sabbath as the law required, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. In the Jewish reckoning of time, a day included any part of a day; thus, Friday was the first day, Saturday was the second day, and Sunday was the third day. Unlike the Jewish leaders, they certainly had no expectation that the disciples would steal the body (27:62–66). When the women arrived at daybreak on Sunday, the third day, Jesus had already risen.

Mark explained that they had gone back to the tomb to bring spices and perfumes to anoint Jesus' body because they had had no time to do so before the Sabbath (Mark 16:1). Anointing a body was a sign of love, devotion, and respect. Bringing spices to the tomb would be like bringing flowers to a grave today. Since they did not embalm bodies in Israel, they would use perfumes as a normal practice. The women undoubtedly knew that Joseph and Nicodemus had already wrapped the body in linen and spices. They probably were going to do a simple external application of the fragrant spices. Matthew, however, omitted the detail of their visit, explaining only that they came to see the tomb.

28:2–4 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. Again a supernatural event took place, probably having occurred before the women arrived at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake (see also 27:51–52) that occurred as the angel of the Lord descended, or it was the means by

which the stone was rolled away from the tomb's entrance. The stone was not rolled back so Jesus could get out, but so others could get in and see that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, just as he had promised. This is as close a description of the Resurrection as the Bible gives us.

Mark records that the women were concerned about how they would get into the tomb to anoint Jesus' body (Mark 16:3). They had seen Joseph put the stone at its entrance (27:60–61), although they may have been unaware of the sealing of the stone and of the guards who had been posted. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw that the large stone had already been rolled aside. An angel of the Lord was sitting on the stone. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. The radiance of this angel made him appear like lightning. These words recall Old Testament visions like that of Daniel (see Daniel 7:9; 10:6). The angel's beauty and glory, coming from heaven itself, caused the posted guards to faint with fear and caused great fear for the women as well (28:5, 8). Matthew and Mark wrote that one angel met the women at the tomb, while Luke mentions two angels. Each Gospel writer chose to highlight different details as he explained the same story, just as eyewitnesses to a news story may each highlight a different aspect of that event. Matthew and Mark probably emphasized just the angel who spoke.

28:5-6 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.” The angel spoke reassuringly to the frightened women. They were looking for Jesus, the human being who had been crucified on the cross. But Jesus was not there; he had risen. Jesus had given the disciples three predictions of both his death and of his resurrection (16:21–28; 17:22–23; 20:17–19). The angel said to the women, “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again” (Luke 24:6–7 NRSV).

The angel invited the women to look into the inner burial chamber and

see the place where he lay. John records that the linen cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus' body were left as if Jesus had passed right through them. The handkerchief was still rolled up in the shape of a head, and it was at about the right distance from the wrappings that had enveloped Jesus' body (John 20:6–7). A grave robber couldn't possibly have made off with Jesus' body and left the linens as if they were still shaped around it. The best explanation was that Jesus had risen from the dead, just as he said he would.

Come and Go

The angel who announced the good news of the Resurrection to the women gave them four messages:

- 1. “Do not be afraid.”** The reality of the Resurrection brings joy, not fear. When you are afraid, remember the empty tomb.
- 2. “He is not here.”** Jesus is not dead and is not to be looked for among the dead. He is alive, with his people.
- 3. “Come and see.”** The women could check the evidence themselves. The tomb was empty then, and it is empty today. The Resurrection is a historical fact.
- 4. “Go quickly and tell.”** They were to spread the joy of the Resurrection. We too are to spread the great news about Jesus' resurrection.

28:7 “Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” The women who had come to anoint a dead body were given another task—proclaiming the Resurrection to the frightened disciples. Mark explained that the angel made special mention of Peter to show that, in spite of Peter's denials, Jesus had not disowned and deserted him. According to Luke's account, several women ran to tell the disciples: “Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in,

he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened” (Luke 24:10–12 NRSV). John, in his personal account, added that he too dashed in amazement to the tomb (John 20:3–5).

The disciples had deserted Jesus in the hour of trial, but the angel’s words held hope of renewal and forgiveness. The disciples had deserted, but they were directed to meet Jesus in Galilee. This was exactly what Jesus had told them during the Last Supper, that he would go ahead of them into Galilee after his resurrection (26:32).

JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD / John 20:1-10

The truth of Christianity rests heavily on the Resurrection. If Jesus rose from the grave, who saw him? How trustworthy were the witnesses? Those who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus went on to turn the world upside down. Most of them also died for being followers of Christ. People rarely die for halfhearted belief. Chapter 20 of John’s Gospel contains the record of Jesus’ resurrection and first appearances to his followers and John’s personal discovery of the empty tomb. The four Gospels provide different accounts of Jesus’ resurrection appearances. These appearances occurred over a forty-day period (Acts 1:3). See the chart below.

Matthew’s Gospel records that after Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the chief priests and Pharisees again went to Pilate. This time they requested that the tomb be made secure. The religious leaders remembered Jesus’ claims to rise again on the third day, so they wanted to make sure that no one could get into the tomb (or maybe that no one could get out). Because the tomb was hewn out of rock in the side of a hill, there was only one entrance. The tomb was sealed by stringing a cord across the stone that was rolled over the entrance. The cord had a clay seal at each end.

The religious leaders took a further precaution, asking that guards be placed at the tomb’s entrance. Their explanation to Pilate: “His disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first” (Matthew 27:64 NRSV). The religious leaders didn’t know that at that moment the disciples were cowering in fear for their lives, not even thinking about the Resurrection. And such a sham

would be unbelievable, for any thinking person would ask: “If Jesus rose again, where is he?” But the Pharisees were terrified of Jesus; and Pilate was still quaking in his Roman sandals from all that had occurred, so he agreed: “You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can” (Matthew 27:65 NRSV). But they did not understand that no rock, seal, or guard could prevent the Son of God from rising again.

20:1-2 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. Mary Magdalene was one of several women who had followed Jesus to the cross, watched his crucifixion (19:25), and then remained to see where he was buried (Matthew 27:61). She, along with other women, was an early follower of Jesus who traveled with him and helped provide for the financial needs of the group: “The twelve were with [Jesus], as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out ... and many others, who provided for them out of their resources” (Luke 8:1-3, NRSV). Mary was obviously grateful to Jesus for freeing her from the torment of demon possession. She was from Magdala, a town near Capernaum in Galilee, and had followed Jesus to Jerusalem and, ultimately, to the foot of his cross and to his tomb.

Because of the short interim between Jesus’ death and the coming of the Sabbath on Friday evening, the women who had stood by the cross had not had time to anoint Jesus. When the Sabbath arrived with the sunset on Friday, they had to go to their homes and rest. But after sundown on Saturday, the end of the Sabbath, they probably purchased and/or prepared the spices, then early on the first day of the week, (the day after the Sabbath, that is, Sunday), Mary Magdalene (also called Mary of Magdala in some versions) came to anoint the body of Jesus with certain spices. According to the other Gospel accounts, she was joined by Mary the mother of James, Salome (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1), and perhaps other women as well.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

These women had followed Joseph to the tomb, and so they knew exactly where to find Jesus’ body when they returned after the

Sabbath with their spices and ointments. These women could not do great things for Jesus—they were not permitted to stand up before the Jewish council or the Roman governor and testify on his behalf—but they did what they could. They stayed at the cross when most of the disciples had fled, and they got ready to anoint their Lord's body. Because of their devotion, they were the first to know about the Resurrection. As believers, we may feel we can't do much for Jesus. But we are called to take advantage of the opportunities given us, doing what we can do and not worrying about what we cannot do.

Mark records that as the women were on their way to the tomb, they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" (Mark 16:3 NRSV). But this would not be a problem, because as they approached they saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. John writes specifically from Mary Magdalene's perspective, as if she were the only one at the tomb. The other women were there, but in the following verses they are gone, for Mary Magdalene is the first person to see the resurrected Christ. At this point, however, the women arrived at the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. They assumed that Jesus' body had been stolen. But the stone had been rolled away, not by grave robbers, and not so that Jesus could get out, but so they, and others, could get in and see that Jesus was gone.

ANGELS

The conception, birth, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are supernatural events beyond human logic or reasoning. Because of this, God sent angels to help certain people understand the significance of what was happening (see Matthew 2:13, 19; Luke 1:11, 26; 2:9; 24:4–7).

Angels are spiritual beings created by God who help carry out his work on earth. They bring God's messages to people (Luke 1:26ff.; 24:4–7), protect God's people (Daniel 6:22), offer encouragement (Genesis 16:7ff.), give guidance (Exodus 14:19), carry out punishment (2 Samuel 24:16), patrol the earth (Zechariah 1:9–14), and fight the forces of evil (2 Kings 6:16–18; Revelation 20:1–2). There are both good and bad angels (Revelation 12:7), but because bad angels are allied with the devil, or Satan, they have considerably less power and authority than good angels. Eventually the main role of angels will be to offer continuous praise to God (Revelation 7:11–12).

The other Gospel accounts record that angels spoke to the women. According to Mark's Gospel, as they went to the tomb, they wondered among themselves how they were going to get in. "When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe" (Mark 16:4-5 NRSV). Luke records two angels who, in no uncertain terms, questioned the women with a slight reprimand: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again" (Luke 24:5-7 NRSV). Then the angels told the women to "go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead" (Matthew 28:7 NKJV).

She ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, [that is, John the Gospel writer] and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." According to Luke's account, several women ran to tell the disciples: "Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened" (Luke 24:10-12 NRSV). Peter was not alone when he dashed in amazement to the tomb; John adds his personal account (as "the other disciple") to his narrative.

20:3-5 Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.... The other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Though John's youthful legs carried him more swiftly to the grave, once he was there he looked in, but he waited for Peter's arrival before entering the cave. Resurrection would not have been their first thought. None of the possible natural explanations for the missing body were of any comfort. If Jesus' body had been stolen or moved by the religious leaders, the disciples would have reason to worry about their own fate.

20:6-7 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and

**went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there....
The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.**

Close examination revealed that the graveclothes had been left as if Jesus had passed right through them. The headpiece was rolled up separately from the other wrappings that had enveloped Jesus' body. A grave robber couldn't possibly have made off with Jesus' body and left the linens as if they were still shaped around it. The neatness and order indicated that there was not a hasty removal of Jesus' body. Rather, Jesus arose and left the wrappings lying there, empty.

20:8-9 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. When John saw the empty tomb and the empty graveclothes, he instantly believed that Jesus must have risen from the dead. The text stresses the importance here of John "seeing and believing" to affirm the eyewitness account of an apostle. Most believers would not have this opportunity; they would have to base their faith on what the witnesses reported.

Though John believed that the graveclothes and open tomb indicated Jesus' resurrection, **he still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead** (see 2:22). John believed, but without complete understanding; that would come later and affirm his belief. The Scripture they would come to understand probably included Psalm 16:10 ("You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay," NIV) and Isaiah 53:11 ("After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied" NIV).

The disciples did not fabricate this story about the Resurrection; in fact, they were surprised that Jesus was not in the tomb. When John saw the graveclothes looking like an empty cocoon from which Jesus had emerged, he believed that Jesus had risen. It wasn't until after they had seen the empty tomb that they remembered what the Scriptures and Jesus had said—he would die, but he would also rise again!

John's account also demonstrates that the disciples couldn't have "invented" the Resurrection in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies because they did not immediately see any Old Testament connection. The fact of the Resurrection opened the disciples' minds to see that God had foretold his plan through the prophets.

The Key

Why is Jesus' resurrection the key to the Christian faith?

- Jesus rose from the dead, just as he said. We can be confident, therefore, that Jesus will accomplish all he has promised.
- Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ, not a false prophet or impostor, is ruler of God's eternal kingdom.
- Because Jesus was resurrected, we can be certain of our own resurrection. Death is not the end—there is future life.
- The divine power that brought Jesus back to life is now available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.

The Resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world.

20:10 Then the disciples went back to their homes. Perplexed, John and Peter left and went back home. They “believed” in something miraculous; that is, they did not fear that Jesus' body had been stolen, as Mary had, but they did not know for sure what they believed or what they should do next. So they just went home. Later they joined with the other disciples behind locked doors (see 20:19).

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE / 20:11-18

We see Jesus' humility in his resurrection as well as in his crucifixion. Jesus did not rise and then march into the temple to confront the religious leaders or Caiaphas; he did not dash to the Praetorium to say to Pilate, “I told you so”; he did not go stand in the center of Jerusalem to impress the crowd. Instead, Jesus revealed himself only to believers. The first person to see him was a woman who had been healed and forgiven and who tearfully stayed at the cross and followed his body to the tomb.

As Jesus demonstrated throughout his life, he responded to those who waited attentively and faithfully. Jesus dissolved the perplexities of the disciples. He dried their tears. He dispelled their doubts. Jesus knows how similar we are to his original disciples, and he does not overpower us either. Even though our faithfulness wavers, Jesus faithfully stays with us.

JESUS' APPEARANCES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

1. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:10-18)

- 2. The other women at the tomb** (Matthew 28:8–10)
- 3. Peter in Jerusalem** (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
- 4. The two travelers on the road** (Mark 16:12–13; Luke 24:13–35)
- 5. Ten disciples behind closed doors** (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–25)
- 6. All eleven disciples (including Thomas)** (John 20:26–31; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
- 7. Seven disciples while fishing on the Sea of Galilee** (John 21:1–14)
- 8. Eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee** (Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:15–18)
- 9. A crowd of 500** (1 Corinthians 15:6)
- 10. Jesus’ brother James** (1 Corinthians 15:7)
- 11. Those who watched Jesus ascend into heaven** (Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:3–8)

20:11–12 Mary stood outside the tomb crying. Mary apparently followed Peter and John back to the tomb. When the two disciples left, she was there alone, still crying, still hoping that somehow she could discover where Jesus’ body had been taken, but fearing the worst.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white. The angels actually looked like humans—not beings with halos and wings. The angels had appeared to the women and then sent them to spread the good news that Jesus was alive (Matthew 28:1–7; Mark 16:1–7; Luke 24:1–12), but apparently they were not in the tomb when Peter and John arrived. Yet they are here again to speak to Mary.

20:13 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” Under normal circumstances this would seem to be an odd question. People might be expected to be crying beside the tomb of a loved one, and even more so if one thought the tomb had been desecrated and the body stolen. However, the angels knew the incredible joy of the empty tomb. They also knew that if these people had listened to Jesus’ words about his resurrection while he was alive, they would not be sad and confused; instead, they would be leaping for joy. So the angels’ question was not odd, but obvious. It was not meant as a rebuke, but as a reminder of heaven’s perspective.

Every tragedy provides us with an opportunity to see Jesus in a new way. As we experience sorrow, we can recall Christ's suffering for us. Our pain is a result of living in a fallen world; his pain was the result of his love for us who inhabit this sinful world. Our pain is deserved, or at least unavoidable; his pain was freely chosen. Our pain reminds us that beyond it lies all the blessing that Christ provided for us by his pain. Because Jesus died, we can be forgiven. Because he lives, we too shall live! Christ's resurrection gives us hope for a future restoration with loved ones and the gift of new bodies in the heavenly kingdom.

Mary simply answered the angels' question, **"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."**

20:14-15 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. Something caused Mary to turn around, probably a feeling that a person had come up behind her. And indeed, next to the tomb stood Jesus, but Mary didn't recognize him. Perhaps this was the same kind of blindness that afflicted the two who walked with the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:15-16). Or perhaps Mary's eyes were so full of tears and her grief so intense that she literally could not see who was standing there. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Jesus repeated the angels' question and added an additional question, asking Mary to specify her request. 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." Mary imagined that this man was the gardener. She was trying to grasp what might have happened to Jesus' body. The shock of having the grave disturbed must have been devastating.

20:16-17 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Mary had been looking for the body of her dead Lord; suddenly, to her amazement, she stood face to face with her living Lord. Mary didn't recognize Jesus at first. Her grief had blinded her, and she couldn't see him because she didn't expect to see him. Then Jesus spoke her name, and immediately she recognized him. A gardener would not have known her name. Imagine the love that flooded Mary's heart when she heard her Savior saying her name!

Mary's immediate response was to touch Jesus and cling to him. But Jesus stopped her: **"Do not hold on to me,"** which could also be translated, "Stop clinging to me." Perhaps Mary wanted to hold Jesus and not lose him again. She had not yet understood the Resurrection. Perhaps she thought this was his promised Second Coming (14:3). Though Mary's title of "teacher" was endearing, Jesus did not want to be detained at the tomb. He was not to remain on this earth in physical form. If he did not ascend to heaven, the Holy Spirit could not come. Both he and Mary had important work to do.

"But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Prior to his death, Jesus had called the disciples his "friends" (15:15). But here, because of the Resurrection, Jesus' disciples had become his brothers (see also Matthew 28:10). Christ's resurrection creates this new level of relationship because it provides for the regeneration of every believer (see 1 Peter 1:3). After his resurrection, Jesus called his disciples "my brothers" (see Hebrews 2:11-14). After Jesus ascended to his Father, he would come to his disciples and give them this new life and relationship by breathing into them the Holy Spirit. Thus, for the first time in the Gospel, it is made clear that Jesus' Father is our Father, that Jesus' God is our God. The death and resurrection of Jesus ushered in a new relationship between believers and God.

20:18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" Thus, Mary was the first person to see the risen Christ.

The Tomb is Empty

Mary did not meet the risen Christ until she had discovered the empty tomb. She responded with joy and obedience by going to tell the disciples. We cannot meet Christ until we discover that he is indeed alive, that his tomb is empty. Are you filled with joy by this good news? How can you share it with others?

And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus' words should have been a great comfort to the disciples. Despite their deserting him in the Garden, he was calling them his "brothers" and explaining that his Father was theirs, his God was

theirs. But this report was no more believed by the disciples than the women's report of the angels' words (see Luke 24:10–11). "She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it" (Mark 16:10–11 NIV). The disciples were still hiding behind locked doors, for fear of the Jews.

HE AROSE!

People who hear about the Resurrection for the first time may need time before they can comprehend this amazing story. Like Mary and the disciples, they may pass through four stages of belief. (1) At first, they may think the story is a fabrication, impossible to believe (20:2). (2) Next, like Peter, they may check out the facts and still be puzzled about what happened (20:6). (3) Only when they encounter Jesus personally will they be able to accept the fact of the Resurrection (20:16). (4) Then, as they commit themselves to the risen Lord and devote their lives to serving him, they begin to understand fully the reality of his presence with them (20:28).

At this point, Matthew records the humorous anecdote about the religious leaders and the guards, who had obviously been unable to stop this "deception" that they had so much feared (Matthew 27:62–66). Matthew alone records that the guards were present at the tomb but "became like dead men" at the appearance of the angels (Matthew 28:4 NRSV). So picture them high-tailing it to the chief priests—breathlessly telling the story of an angel descending, an earthquake, and the tomb opening—and then not being able to remember anything else! Notice that they did not go to Pilate, for to do so might have meant their lives. Roman soldiers who let a prisoner escape (even a dead one) would often pay for their negligence with their lives.

The religious leaders dealt with the soldiers as they had with Judas—with money. They gave the frightened men a large sum of money and told them to forget whatever they saw. "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble" (Matthew 28:13–14 NRSV). These soldiers "took the money and did as

they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day” (Matthew 28:15 NRSV).

Meanwhile, a very alive Jesus was making himself known to his beloved followers: the women (Matthew 28:8–10), Peter (Luke 24:34), and two travelers on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12–13; Luke 24:13–35). Then he went to see his disciples.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES BEHIND LOCKED DOORS / 20:19–23

Mary’s announcement (20:18) must have stunned the disciples. Later the news that the Lord was alive came from two travelers who had unknowingly spent the day walking to Emmaus with Jesus (Luke 24:15–16). Confused, elated, doubtful, and fearful, the disciples stayed close together, hoping to endure the waiting in one place. They were huddled behind locked doors when Jesus appeared to all of them. There is no real safe place in the world without Jesus, but his presence makes the most dangerous places bearable. When Jesus appeared to his disciples on this occasion he left them five gifts: (1) his own presence; (2) his peace (20:19, 21); (3) a mission: “I am sending you”; (4) a companion—the Holy Spirit; and (5) a message of forgiveness.

20:19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. The disciples were still perplexed and apparently had gotten together that night behind bolted doors. They probably were discussing the women’s reported sighting of angels, what Peter and John saw at the tomb, and Mary’s astounding claim that she had seen Jesus. At some point during the day, Jesus had appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34), and the women had reported the angel’s words that the disciples were to go to Galilee and meet Jesus there (Matthew 28:7). But for some reason, they did not go; instead they stayed in Jerusalem, hiding from the Jewish leaders. Before long, however, their confusion would be dispelled.

The first news arrived in the night with the sounds of excited knocking on the door. Two disciples were allowed in, breathlessly telling the rest of the group that they had met Jesus on the road to Emmaus and had

talked with him most of the day (Luke 24:13–35). The variety of reports must have had an effect. Shock and disbelief began to be replaced with wild hope. Luke recounts that this was when Jesus made his first appearance to his gathered disciples (although we find out later that Thomas was missing from the group). This appearance is astounding because Jesus came and stood among them, somehow appearing to them in a locked room. Jesus could do this because his resurrection and subsequent glorification had altered his bodily form. In this new spiritual form, he was able to transcend all physical barriers.

Don't Hide... Seek!

Though the Resurrection had occurred, the disciples were hiding out! The happy news had not driven their doubts away. But we are like them when we lock ourselves behind closed doors:

- **Doors of isolation**—If we never make friends with non-Christians or interact with the world, we deny God's power to change lives. Hiding in church, or refusing to make contact with anyone suspected to be a nonbeliever, limits Christ's work. The truth does not have to hide or isolate itself.

- **Doors of anonymity**—If we relate to those around us but never tell them that we are Christians, we deprive them of discovering what God has done in our lives.

- **Doors of superficiality**—If we only talk of sports and weather and keep to safe subjects with people around us, we cooperate with the world's intention to ignore God and any subject that might lead someone to seriously consider God's perspective.

Christ can make his presence known behind closed doors, but he will not unlock them for us. Unless we step out of our hiding places, we will never see all that Christ can do through us.

“Peace be with you.” This was a standard Hebrew greeting, but here it was filled with deeper meaning (see 14:27; 16:33). Jesus would repeat these words in verse 21.

20:20 He showed them his hands and side. The disciples

were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Due to Jesus' sudden, miraculous appearance among them, the disciples "were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost" (Luke 24:37 NIV). Jesus needed to convince them that he, including his touchable physical body, was present with them. When they realized who he was, they rejoiced. Jesus had said, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.... You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy" (16:16, 20, NIV). The "little while" was over, joy had replaced grief, and "no one will take away your joy" (16:22, NIV).

20:21-23 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Jesus gave his peace to them and then commissioned them to be his representatives, even as he had been the Father's (see 17:18). Jesus again identified himself with his Father. He told the disciples by whose authority he did his work. Then he gave the task to his disciples of spreading the gospel message around the world. They were sent with authority from God to preach, teach, and do miracles (see Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-49)—in essence, to continue across the world what Jesus had begun in Palestine. Whatever God has asked you to do, remember: (1) Your authority comes from God, and (2) Jesus has demonstrated by words and actions how to accomplish the job he has given you. As the Father sent his Son, Jesus sends his followers ... and you. Your response is to determine from day to day those to whom the Father has sent you.

Resources: Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Program, Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, Guzik, David, Life Application Bible Commentary, Factbook Logos bible Barton, Barton, Barton, Bruce B. 1996. Matthew. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Barton, Bruce B. 1993. John. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

Sermon Notes:

Happy Resurrection Sunday Everyone... What a Glorious Day as we celebrate the Risen Lord...

I am Reminded of the words from Apostle Paul:

"Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The

sting of death is sin... But thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything about our lives... Our Past, Present, and Future...

Hear these Words Today: God's Not Done With You

[Let's Pray]

I Titled today's Sermon: "Who are You Looking for?"

Let me set the Scene for Today's Sermon...

"It's early Sunday morning, just before dawn in Jerusalem. The air is cool, and somber quiet hangs over the city after the chaos of the Crucifixion two days prior. Jesus, the teacher and miracle worker was brutally executed on a Roman Cross, His body laid in a borrowed tomb sealed by a massive stone and guarded by Roman soldiers. Jesus' followers were devastated, fearful and confused... they are in hiding, grappling with grief and shattered hopes & dreams" (1)

We all have had High Hopes & Dreams shattered by this Evil World...

I had Hoped my Mom would get to experience the Joys of being a Great Grandmother... But God had different plans...

-My mom is in Heaven...

When God has different plans then our Hopes & Dreams... Life gets Foggy.

Here's the Truth: God's Plans are Bigger & Better even when we don't understand...

Early on Sunday Morning all the Disciples of Jesus Christ were asleep at a hidden location in fear they too may be executed... But Two Women dared to go to the tomb where Christ had been laid...

Let's Read what happens: Read Matthew 28: 1-8

I find it interesting that its 2 women that went to the Tomb.

It wasn't Peter, James, or John Jesus' inner Circle of Friends...

It was Mary Magdelene, and another follower of Jesus named Mary- (Mary was a popular name)

Let me share with you some Important Details of the Life of Mary Magdelene... Before she met Jesus

[Story of Mary Magdelene]

When you have oppression living inside you... You need some sort of Fix to calm the mind down...

Understand... Mary's Hopes & Dreams were shattered until she met Jesus many years before Jesus' death...

Mary's Life was Transformed by the Power of Jesus...

This same Mary was at the Foot of the Cross when Jesus was crucified...

This same Mary left everything and traveled with Jesus and gave money to support the ministry...

Now let's Read the Rest of the Story to understand the Power of the Resurrection... Read John 20:3-17

I have to ask Who are You Looking for?

Listen... If you're looking for another savior, you will find your life in a Real Mess

Here's the Good News Today... Jesus is Alive!!

Friends... Mary knew if she just found Jesus everything was going to be okay...

The Power of Jesus' Resurrection changes our Lives...

For those who have found Jesus... Keep your eyes fixed on Him!

Devotional Questions

Read Matthew 28:1-7

This passage describes the resurrection of Jesus and the women arriving at the tomb.

1. What emotions might the women have felt when they found the tomb empty, and how does this reflect moments of unexpected transformation in your own life?

2. The angel tells the women, “Do not be afraid.” What areas of your life do you need to surrender fear to God, trusting in His power and resurrection?

3. The angel instructs the women to share the news of the resurrection with the disciples. How can you be a messenger of hope and resurrection in your own community?

4. Reflect on the significance of Jesus rising “just as he said.” How does this affirmation of Jesus’ words encourage you to trust in the reliability of His promises today?

Read John 20:3-17

This passage recounts the discovery of the empty tomb and Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the risen Jesus.

1. Consider Peter and John running to the tomb in their desire to understand what happened. How can you cultivate a similar eagerness to seek truth in your spiritual journey?

2. Mary Magdalene initially does not recognize Jesus until He calls her by name. Reflect on how you experience or perceive God’s personal calling in your life.

3. Jesus instructs Mary to go and tell the disciples about His resurrection. How can you share the good news of Jesus’ resurrection with others through your actions and words?

4. As Mary encounters the risen Christ, her grief turns to joy. In what ways has or can the truth of the resurrection transform areas of sorrow into joy for you or those around you?