

I. My Notes ... WWC message 7/5

II. Series: That You Might Believe

- Title: In the Garden
- Text: John 20:1-11
- Quote: "We live in a culture that has, for centuries now, cultivated the idea that the skeptical person is always smarter than one who believes. You can almost be as stupid as a cabbage as long as you doubt." – Dallas Willard (Theologian, Author)

III. Introduction

- We live today with 20/20 hindsight. Some of the moments we look at in Scripture must have been incredibly stressful and confusing. We are about to look at one of them. Jesus has been crucified – the Disciples world has been turned upside down. They were dealing with confusion (what do we do now?), fear (are we next to be killed because of our association with Jesus?), and grief (the One they loved and devoted their lives to had just been killed). The stress and fear of the moment must have been overwhelming. Were they going to have to leave their homes and start all over elsewhere? The lessons that Jesus had been giving them hadn't taken root yet. The loss and hurt was tremendous.
- The Resurrection changed that. This event is recorded in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20. Reading all these

reports gives a fairly complete picture of the circumstances surrounding this incredible event (many believe it is the greatest miracle in history). The Resurrection of Jesus is a greatly debated topic. Many have dug into the historical and theological significance of this event.

- Look at it from today's perspective ... **1 Peter 1:3-4** says, *"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay."* (NLT). Our faith in Jesus Christ opens the door to a new life, a new person, who is forgiven and free, who is in balance again. Our life here on earth can now be lived with great expectation. We are joint heirs with Jesus (see Romans 8), and one day we'll receive the promise of a certain eternity in the presence of the One who created everything. It's a reward that goes beyond imagination.
- (The following is an open confession) ... There is part of me that is pressing forward to finish our journey through John's Gospel. I can see the finish line and am looking forward to getting there. But that can make me want to rush beyond these well-known moments and miss the lessons contained within. I began this message with a different goal in mind. But I'm learning to listen and through my prayers for direction and conversations I have had with those who challenge my thought process (yes, I'm talking mostly about Jennie and that's a good

thing) I have stepped back from pressing on and taken another look, it's a good thing. We will be here a little longer than I originally thought.

- I have been on this pursuit of how truth matters lately. We live in an age when truth is questioned at every possible moment. Rereading the moments of early Sunday morning after the crucifixion of Jesus helped me step back on ponder the situation. Doing what I typically do, I hit the internet to research the early moments of that morning. From the perspective in John's Gospel, I leaned by search toward Mary Magdelene. There is a lot said about her, some quite different things than what is recorded in Scripture. Some accounts have her married to Jesus at 27 and having children by Jesus until she was in her 40's. There are accounts that she died in southern France at age 60. And yet some report that Mary was the "disciple that Jesus loved" and she was the author of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, not John. And still others promote that she wrote her own Gospel that painted the picture of a feminist follower of Jesus, one who was an inspiration to other women. I say all this to remind everyone that you can't trust everything you read on the internet.
- Let's discuss some lessons we can learn from this event in John's Gospel ...

#### IV. Text

- **John 20:1-2 CSB**

*On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she went running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, "They've taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him!"*

- Let me say this right from the start. All things have a beginning. The Resurrection of Jesus points to our new life in Christ, it signifies the fulfillment of Jesus' words and God's promise. It happened on the FIRST day of the week ... just like Creation began with the FIRST day, so has our newness (we are a "new creation" – see 2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Mary came to the tomb where Jesus was buried out of love and devotion. Reading the other Gospels, it seems that Mary agreed to meet with other women at the tomb to properly prepare the body of their Lord in death. She arrived first. She was still grieving the loss of her Lord. I'm sure that the hurt and tears were evident.
- Just a thought ... It was the women, especially Mary, who agreed to do things properly. To honor Jesus by preparing His body for a proper burial. This is representative that it is often those viewed as less, those marginalized, those who are in the background that Jesus ministers to and through.
- Looking through her pain and loss, Mary is about to be confronted by Truth and (God's) Justice.

- She came and saw an opened tomb ... the stone was rolled away. She assumed (as most would) that they had taken the body of Jesus and ran back to tell the others. The words Jesus spoke about His Resurrection hadn't sunk it yet. She was looking at the situation through her understanding and expectation. We all have done this at one time or another.
- It must have been difficult to deal with her tremendous sorrow. It's something we all can relate to. Mary assumed theft, she thought that the body of Jesus had been stolen – triumph over death ... Victory, was the furthest thing from her mind.

#### V. Reaction

- **John 20:3-10 Phillips NT**

*3-10 Peter and the other disciple set off at once for the tomb, the two of them running together. The other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. He stooped and looked inside and noticed the linen cloths lying there but did not go in himself. Hard on his heels came Simon Peter and went straight into the tomb. He noticed that the linen cloths were lying there, and that the handkerchief, which had been round Jesus's head, was not lying with the linen cloths but was rolled up by itself, a little way apart. Then the other disciple, who was the first to arrive at the tomb, came inside as well, saw what had happened and believed. (They did not yet understand the scripture which said that he must rise from the dead.) So the disciples went back again to their homes.*

- The news must have come as a shock. They couldn't believe this would even happen. Peter and "the other disciple" (John) took off like a shot from a gun. They rushed to see it for themselves. Not much in the last few days had made sense, this added to the distress and confusion. Peter, bold as ever, rushed right into the tomb to find it empty. John followed, watching and pondering. The body of Jesus wasn't there (we know it shouldn't have been). They saw the folded linens that Jesus had been quickly covered with to adhere to the law. Not knowing what to do, they went to tell the others what they had seen.
- Today, we know that the Resurrection of Jesus is essential to our faith. It is because of His death that we have forgiveness, that by His blood the penalty of our sins is paid in full. It is because of His Resurrection, the truth that He is alive, that we have a full and eternal bond – connection – with the Lord God.
- I want to focus on one statement ... *"So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed."* **John 20:8 NASB**. Entering the tomb, finding it empty, the words of Jesus finally clicked in the heart and mind of John. He recognized that Jesus was Resurrected from His horrible death. His sacrifice was complete, and God's promise had come in full force.

## VI. Back to Mary

- Her grief, her sorrow, drove her to want to find her Lord's body. She went back to the place of His burial. Mary Magdalene is

one in a list several women who provided for Jesus and the disciples out of their resources. Mary Magdalene was freed from seven demons (according to what we know from the Gospels), but it is not clear exactly what kind of captivity she was freed from. Was it mental illness? A physical ailment? Did she have a sordid past? We just don't know. Mary was fully restored to who she was purposed to be when she encountered Jesus ... we just don't know what her old life looked like.

- Mary loved Jesus deeply. Her devotion to Him was evident throughout the entire time Jesus was on Earth. She was there at big moments, she stood at the foot of the Cross, she was the first to the tomb. But now, she was even more distraught because she couldn't honor her Lord.

- **John 20:11-18 CSB**

*11 But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

*"Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him."*

*14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. 15 "Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it that you're seeking?" Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him, and I will take him away."*

16 Jesus said to her, *“**Mary.**”*

*Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!”—which means “Teacher.”*

17 *“**Don’t cling to me,**” Jesus told her, “**since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that 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 she told them what he had said to her.*

- The Fall of Man took place in the Garden – God’s promise of our resurrection, our life in Christ, was revealed in a Garden. In Eden, our separation from God took place because of disobedience. Think about it, man (Adam) had a deeply intimate bond with God. God came and walked with him in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). In the Garden, at the Tomb, full and complete restoration took place. Where sorrow began, healing took place.
- Many may not agree with this statement but here goes ... God’s justice does not retaliate, it brings restoration. **Psalms 89:14** **LSB** says, *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.”* Let me break it down for you. Sin (disobedience, missing the mark) requires justice. The lessons we find in Scripture are God dealing with sin – equitably and fairly. It is because of His great love for man that He opened the door to restoration by paying the penalty for sin Himself (Colossians 1:14; 1 John 2:2).



- Mary stood in the Garden broken and crying. She was at such a loss that she didn't recognize the Lord standing before her. Jesus didn't correct her, He loved her. Our Lord cares about the relationship above everything else.
- Here is a theological statement for you ... In Eden, man (humanity) hid from God. In resurrection's garden, God meets humanity in their search for Him.
- Jesus called Mary by name – He didn't preach, He didn't scold, He didn't ask her anything ... He just called her name. The recognition became instant. Jesus called, Mary responded. Your name may be being called by the Lord, are you listening?

## VII. The First Commission

- Many misunderstand what Jesus said to Mary after she recognized it was her Lord in front of her.
- **John 20:17 CSB**  
*“Don't cling to me,” Jesus told her, “since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”*
- Jesus isn't telling Mary not to touch Him – In just a short while He will tell Thomas to touch His wounds. It's about holding Him here. Mary's reaction would have been to hold on and not let go, ever. Jesus is saying that He must go but before He goes, Jesus commissions Mary to witness to others about Him. Jesus sees her and sends her to be a witness. Mary's brokenness is

resolved - hope is restored. She is sent to be a witness. This is what a relationship with the Lord is about, letting others see Grace and Truth and how it changes your life.

- It all changed with one word ... Today, in a world where doubt and grief fill the air, where voices are silenced, and many are minimized, restoration – your resurrection comes with one word ... your name. God is calling, are you listening.
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always