

Weeping Turned to Joy
John 20:11-18

INTRO: Mary Magdalene, last at the cross where Jesus died as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” and first at the garden tomb, early on that resurrection morn, is to be witness to the most important event in world history: the empty tomb! What a great honor God conferred on this consecrated, dedicated, faithful servant.

She was at the tomb early on that first resurrection morn. Peering into the grave, she sees that it is empty; and she weeps.

Finding the tomb empty, Mary rushes to Peter and John saying: “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher and we know not where they have laid Him” (20:2a). Peter and John go to the tomb with Mary Magdalene and find that what she had said was true: the tomb was empty. Then Peter and John “went away again unto their own homes” (20:10). But not so with Mary! We find her standing at the door of the tomb weeping. She wept at first; but as we shall see, her weeping was turned to joy.

I. VSS 11-14, MARY AND THE ANGELS

A. Vs 11, Mary wept as she stood at the sepulcher.

1. Mary wept, Greek *klaio*: “to wail.”

a. She wept because she loved Christ.

b. She wept because the sepulcher was empty.

c. The empty tomb that caused Mary to weep should have caused her to rejoice. Had the body of her Lord still been there, then she would have had cause to weep.

1- If the body would have been there, then He would have failed in His promise to rise again.

2- If the body would have been there, then His work on the cross would have been in vain; and Mary, as well as you and I, would yet be in our sins (I Cor 15:14, 17).

2. “She stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre.”

a. “When we sorrow, even as others which have no hope, when we walk by sight instead of faith, when we are moved by the flesh instead of the spirit, we stoop down, and are occupied with things below” (Pink 271).

b. Mary’s action gives a warning to us. We live in a day

when: “Men’s hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Lk 21:26).

1- The more attention we pay to the evil around us, the more we are occupied by it, the more our hearts will fail.

2- We need to heed the Savior’s words: “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Lk 21:26). See also Psalm 121:1-2.

B. Vs 12, This is the only place in scripture where we find angels sitting.

1. They were sitting in the place where “the body of Jesus had lain.” They were witnesses of the rest secured for believers through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:3 says, “For we which have believed do enter into rest;” and Hebrews 4:10, “For he that is enter into his [Christ’s] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works.....”

2. There were two angels. Some say they were Michael and Gabriel, but we are not told. One was seated at the head; the other at the feet “where the body of Jesus had lain.”

a. What the Holy Spirit led John to write here is to be linked to Exodus 25:22.

b. Christ is the true meeting place between God and man!

3. The garments of the angels were white. White symbolizes:

a. Holiness,

b. Joy and victory,

c. Triumph of life over death,

d. Triumph of light over darkness,

e. Triumph of grace over sin.

C. Vs 13, The angels say to Mary: “Woman, why weepest thou?” They knew why she was weeping, but they wanted her to search her heart.

1. The fact that Christ was not there was grounds for rejoicing! NOTE: The angels use the same language as the Savior uses in 20:15. The words of the angels were spoken by the command of God.

2. Mary’s answer is one of faith and ignorance, of affection

- and fear.
3. Mary calls Jesus "My Lord" in her answer to the angels.
 - a. Every believer can speak of Jesus as "My Lord."
 - b. Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd." In Song of Solomon 2:16, we read: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." The Apostle Paul speaks of His Lord's love for him in Gal 2:20: "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."
 - c. Can you call Him, "My Lord."
- D. Vs 14, When Mary turned from the angels, she saw another standing in front of her.
1. Mary was so distressed, so caught up in her thoughts that she saw Him, but she didn't see Him. Yes, her eyes were blurred by tears, but they were so when she saw the angels.
 2. Possibly II Cor 5:16 will shed light on what happened here. Just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Him, Mary does not recognize Him. Mary does not know Him here. The resurrection body was different.
 3. "She could not recognize Jesus because she insisted on facing the wrong direction. She could not take her eyes off the tomb and so had her back to him. Again it is often so with us. At such a time, our eyes are upon the cold earth of the grave; but we must wrench our eyes away from that. That is not where our loved ones are; their worn-out bodies may be there; but the real person is in the heavenly places in the fellowship of Jesus face to face, and in the glory of God" (Barclay vol 2 314).

II. VSS 15-17, MARY AND THE MASTER

- A. Vs 15, Mary hears the same question she had heard a moment ago, "Woman, why weepest thou?" These are the first words of our risen Savior. This is just like Jesus! In Isaiah 61:1, we are told that He came to "bind up the brokenhearted." In the end, He will wipe the tears from the eyes of His own (Rev 21:4).
1. Our Lord's first question to Mary was a gentle reproof. Ought you not be rejoicing instead of mourning.
 2. The second question is a searching one: "Whom seekest thou?"
 - a. Who are you looking for among the dead?
 - b. Have you forgotten that the crucified one, who gave

His life for sinners, did so that He might take it up again.

3. The words of Mary in the last part of this verse remind us of Song of Solomon 3:3: "Saw ye him who my soul loveth?"
 - a. "I will take Him away."
 - 1- He was her all in all.
 - 2- He was all her own.
 - b. On, that we would want Him, really want Jesus to be our all in all.
 - c. "She never mentioned the name Jesus; she thought everyone must know of whom she was thinking; her mind was so full of him that there was not anyone else for her in all the world" (Barclay vol 2 313).
- B. Vs 16, Jesus calls her by name: "Mary."
1. He speaks as Savior to one of the redeemed.
 - a. John 10:3, "And he calleth his own sheep by name."
 - b. Isaiah 43:1.
 2. Mary turns to Jesus and says, "Rabboni, which is to say Master."
 - a. Mary recognized His voice. John 10:4, "The sheep follow him, for they know his voice."
 - b. John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."
 - c. Here is one of the sheep responding to the call of the Good Shepherd. She recognizes Him. This has been called the greatest recognition story ever told.
 3. Mary's weeping is turned to joy unspeakable.
 - a. At His voice, she turns away from the tomb to which she had turned when she thought He was the gardener.
 - b. At His voice, she falls at His feet.
- C. Vs 17, Jesus the Lord tells Mary not to touch Him. The word touch is the Greek word *haptomai*, "to hold on."
1. Jesus had not yet ascended to the Father. This is why she is not to hold on to Him. It is apparent that He ascended to the Father before He appeared to the disciples in the house (vs 19).
 2. Some disagree, but I believe Jesus presented His precious blood at the throne of God, entering into that holy place as our high priest and redeemer (Heb 9:12).

3. "Go to my brethren...."
 - a. Mary was to be the first witness of the resurrection of Christ.
 - b. "Brethren." We are His seed, his brethren because of the resurrection (John 12:24; Rom 8:29).
4. If you are saved, God is your Father and your God.

III. VSS 18, MARY THE MESSENGER

- A. Mary was a faithful witness to the Gospel message that Jesus had died; she saw Him on the cross. She knew that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had placed Him in the virgin tomb, and she knows now that He's alive! Resurrected from the dead.
- B. She was to tell the Gospel story.

CONCLUSION: Do you know the resurrected Lord?

Dr. Cecil A. Fayard, Jr.
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