

John 20:11-18 Resurrection Grace 4/1/18

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.

(Pastor prays)

Let's drop deep into the story of the resurrection of Jesus.

According to John's Gospel, Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and in verse 12, He was raised between two angels giving strength to the phrase – “Behold, I will make things new.”

In Chapter 19, His body was given to Joseph of Arimathea, a secret follower, and to Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night. They took the body of Jesus, put Him in a new garden tomb and closed it up. In Chapter 20, besides Jesus, there are three primary players: Peter, John and an unlikely woman named Mary Magdalene. She's the one in verse 1 who went to the tomb of Jesus while it was still dark and ran away in horror when she saw that robbers had been there. The stone was rolled away. She went and got Peter and John and they came running. They left her. They get to the tomb, go in, and see the grave clothes there. Peter doesn't get it, but verse 8 says John believed. Even still, in verse 10, they go home.

That brings us to our passage. I love this passage. It's filled with joy and change and wonder. I love this passage because it speaks to the goodness of God shown in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. I want you to see:

God's Grace is On Full Display in the Resurrection

God's Grace Overcomes Everything

Verse 1 opens with Mary and notice it says, "But Mary." That's a contrast. Verse 10 tells us who the contrasting is *with*. Peter and John, they went home. The resurrected Lord Jesus is going to appear to Mary Magdalene before anyone else. We don't know much about Mary from Magdalene. We know she was a follower of Jesus and she had seven devils cast out of her by Jesus, but we don't know much else. She was in no way a prominent figure in the Gospel story. What we do know of her is not great and yet, she's the very first person Jesus appears to after He's raised from the dead.

In Christ, God's grace overcomes everything. The past, reputation, abuse, grief, hate, addiction, racism... The fact the Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene reminds us that God uses the weak to show Himself strong. He died on the cross to purchase sinners and God raised Him from the dead to show us that God's grace overcomes everything. I mean all of it: divorce, adultery, mixed-up complex problems.... There is nothing too nasty that God's grace in Christ will not overcome it. Let me show you something else.

God's Grace Sometimes Has Tears

Look at Mary standing there at the tomb in verse 11. *But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.* Weeping. That's not the polite and composed tearful widow dabbing her eyes with a tissue. That word is the word for wailing... Falling on the floor and being overcome with loud crying.

Mary has been through it. She loved Jesus. She watched him die. She stood there when all the men were gone. Now she's come in the dark to see about His body and it's gone. There's no telling the desecration they're doing with it. Verses 11-12 have her finally looking into the tomb, and there she meets two angels, one sitting where the head of Jesus was and the other at His feet.

Now it's probably still dark because it was in verse 1 and not much time has passed. In the dark, that's where Jesus shows Himself. That's where He works. Although He is the light of the world, Jesus is also lord over the dark. If you feel like you are groping in the dark, Jesus is there even if you don't feel or recognize Him. Let's read the story.

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.

The angels asked her a question and she answers in verse 13. She’s looking for a dead body. She’s looking for a corpse. She’s looking for a *what!* – not a *whom!* She’s looking for the wrong thing, and then something happens in verse 13. Either there was a noise behind her or the angels looked beyond her, but in verse 14, she turns around and she sees Jesus standing but she did not know it was Him. Maybe it was too dark, maybe she was crying too hard or maybe she was just delirious.

But this also happened elsewhere in the Bible. Remember the disciples on the Emmaus Road? The story is in Luke. They were walking with Jesus but did not recognize Him. Or in Matthew 28 when disciples were worshipping Him but some doubted, or even in John 21 when Jesus appeared on the bank of the sea and He called out to the disciples fishing and they didn’t recognize Him.

Here, in verse 14, Mary is with the resurrected Lord but doesn’t know He’s there. Listen, while you are still in the dark, Jesus works in the dark. When you don’t see or recognize His presence, He’s there. Look, when you are totally oblivious to what is going on around you, Jesus attacks and infiltrates the darkness with light. It was still dark in the text but Jesus, the light of the world, shines in the darkness. He reclaims the darkness as a platform for miracles. Grace sometimes has tears: tears of confusion, or releasing something or someone, giving up an old life for a new life in Christ. In Christ, God’s grace overcomes everything. Grace sometimes has tears.

Grace Has a Voice and the Voice is Jesus

Follow the story in the text. Verse 14 says that Mary sees Jesus but doesn’t recognize Him. In verse 15, Jesus asks her the same thing the angels had asked her except He adds a “whom” to it. Verse 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.”*

She was looking for a “*what*” but what she needed was a “*whom*.”

You are looking for something but what you need is someone and that one is Jesus. So Mary keeps talking in verse 15, prattling to the point of hysteria and right to the edge of losing it mentally. And in verse 16, Jesus stops the hysteria in one word. *Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).*

It was His voice. Hearing His voice, and—more specifically the voice of Jesus— calling her name. Pause there. Remember in John 10 when Jesus was talking to His detractors? Remember what Jesus said in John 10: 26-27, *but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

His voice, His call is the power to open eyes to see. Isn’t that what happened at the tomb of Lazarus? He was dead several days and Jesus called out in a loud voice “Come forth!” The voice is the power.

In Revelation 1, Jesus has a voice like the sound of a trumpet, like the sound of many waters. Even Jesus himself said so in John 5:25, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.* In verse 16, Mary shook from her hysteria and recognized the Lord and ran to embrace Him...Which leads to the next point.

Grace Rearranges All that We Know and Love

Jump back into the narrative. Mary is understandably ecstatic to have Jesus back but this resurrection is not like what happened when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Things are not going back like they were. He tells her, “let go.” *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.’”* I’ve not ascended to the Father yet but I have a message for you.

Now, I want you to slow down and hear what Jesus tells Mary to tell the disciples and listen to all that is embedded in this message. Verse 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.’”* 108 times in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to God as “Father”; 71 times He refers to God

as “the Father”; 21 times He refers to God as “My Father.” Not once has He ever called God the disciples’ Father. Never, until now.

Now He tells Mary – Go tell the brothers, I am ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God. You see, through the work of Jesus on the cross, His redeeming blood and His resurrection, it’s through the cross that a new relationship is made possible, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

God no longer holds us in contempt as rebels who break his law. Now, in Christ, God adopts us as sons and daughters. Ephesians 1:5 says that, *he predestined us^l for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will*, Romans 8:15 says, *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”*

This is the story of God’s grace, and God’s grace is on full display at the resurrection. It’s why we worship on Sunday. It’s why we baptize in the name of Jesus, have The Lord’s Supper and put a cross on display: because Jesus died in the place of sinners, satisfying the anger of God. God raised Him from the dead and offers His love and forgiveness to anyone here who will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

We are saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

(Pastor extends the invitation and prays)