

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 20: 11-18: The Lord Appears to Mary Magdalene

"But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

¹⁴ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, 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,^[a] "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,^[b] and that He had spoken these things to her."

Background Notes

After Peter and John returned to the place where they were staying in Jerusalem, Mary lingered at the empty tomb. As she looked into the inner chamber of the tomb, she saw two angels sitting on the shelf or niche in the rock wall of the tomb where the body of the Lord had been lying. From Luke's account, we know that these two angels appeared as men. They were not glowing with radiant light, and they didn't have wings and halos -- they appeared as men. In Matthew and Mark's account, we read of one angel. Notice that Matthew and Mark didn't say that there was **only** one angel -- there were two angels, but Matthew and Mark focused on the one angel who was probably the spokesman (or shall we say, the "spokes-angel").

When Mary turned around, she saw the Lord standing outside the tomb. However, Mary didn't know that it was the Lord at first -- she thought that the man she saw was the gardener. In other words, the Lord didn't appear in dazzling white apparel, or with a halo, but in ordinary clothes, and probably not white. He looked like an ordinary man, so much so that Mary mistook Him for a gardener. This was not the way the Lord appeared in all His post-resurrection appearances -- certainly not the way He appeared to Paul on the Damascus road.

Notice in verse 15 that Mary still didn't believe that the explanation for the empty tomb was a resurrection. She said to the Lord, thinking He was a gardener, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." She must have believed that Joseph of Arimathea had given permission to the gardener to move the body to a different location, and she wanted to make sure that the Lord was buried properly.

Then Mary recognized the Lord when He called her by name: *"Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher)." "Rabboni" is a strengthened form of the term "Rabbi." Mary was essentially saying "My great teacher." Notice, as far as a background note goes, that John added, "which is to say, Teacher." This addition indicates that John certainly was writing to a much larger audience than just Jewish people; such a statement as "which is to say, Teacher" would not have been needed if John was writing only to a Jewish audience who would have understood the title "Rabboni."*

Doctrinal/Teaching Points

1. The resurrection of Christ involves new relationships.

In verse 17 we read, *"Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" Now what did the Lord mean when He said, "Do not cling to Me"? If you read the commentaries, you will find a lot of different views on this statement. Mary was probably not hugging the Lord, but holding onto His feet as she worshiped Him. The idea in, "Do not cling to Me" is probably not "don't touch me!" because, as we will see in verse 27 of this chapter, the Lord invited Thomas to touch Him. In addition, the idea in "Do not cling to Me" is probably not "stop holding me back from ascending to heaven." Possibly the meaning is, "Mary, you don't have to cling to me. My ascension is not yet -- you'll see me again before my ascension." Another possibility for the meaning is "Mary, you don't have to cling to me, this is not the return that I predicted. I'm not here to stay -- I haven't even ascended to my Father yet." That might be the idea.*

I believe that the main idea in "Mary, stop clinging to Me" is the idea of "new relationships." That is, "Mary, stop clinging to Me, because things are different now. Relationships are not the same as they were before the resurrection. I will not be here anymore bodily; I'll be ascending to heaven. The Holy Spirit will be sent to comfort and guide and teach you."

*Look at verse 17 to see further information about new relationships: "Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" In John 15, the Lord referred to His own disciples as **friends**. Now He was referring to them as **"My brethren."** What a great new relationship -- brethren of Jesus Christ! Do you realize that is your position, if you are a believer? We are His brethren! Hebrews 2:11: *"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren."**

Notice further that the Lord said, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." In the new relationships, even though we are brethren of Christ, there still is a distinction between His relationship to the Father as the Son, and our relationship to the Father as believers. The resurrection of Christ involves new relationships.

2. The resurrection of Christ involves new responsibilities.

Mary had the great privilege of being the first one to see our risen Lord, but now she was given a responsibility -- she was to go and tell! In verse 18 we see that she obeyed -- Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. She had a responsibility to go and tell of the resurrection, and she obeyed.

*The resurrection of Christ involves new responsibilities. We too, like Mary, have new responsibilities as Christians. We have the responsibility to tell others about the **living***

Christ. Belief in the resurrection is essential to salvation. Do we have Scripture to back that up? Certainly! Romans 10:9: "...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Belief in the resurrection of Christ is essential for salvation, and we have a responsibility to preach that. Are you fulfilling your responsibility? Am I fulfilling my responsibility? The resurrection of Christ involves new responsibilities.

When we lived in Pittsburgh, a large church right along side one of the major highways through the heart of the city placed a sign on the roof of the church, where everybody passing by could see it. IN big, bold, white letters was the statement "**JESUS IS ALIVE!**" You couldn't miss it! That church was certainly fulfilling its responsibility. Are we? Now I'm not suggesting that you put a sign on your roof, but let's take our responsibility personally. Are we going to tell someone about the resurrection this week? The resurrection of Christ involves new responsibilities.

Practical Application

Your sorrow can be turned to joy!

In verse 11 Mary was weeping. The word used here could be translated "wailing." It was a loud expression of great grief. But Mary's sorrow was turned to joy when she heard her name spoken by the Lord: "Mary." The Lord calls His own people by name. John 10:3 "*...the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*"

What made the difference between Mary weeping in sorrow, and Mary responding in joy? It was the resurrection! The resurrection of Christ! That made all the difference -- the resurrection of Christ makes the difference. Your sorrow can be turned to joy. Is it possible that you have sorrow in your life right now? Your sorrow can be turned to joy. If you're a non-believer, your sorrow can be turned to joy this very day as you commit your life to Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Your sorrow can be turned to joy! Maybe you're a believer, and you're going through some hard times right now -- your sorrow can be turned to joy, too, as you appreciate the reality of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus is alive and He cares for you! He is preparing a place for you, and He is coming back for you! Your sorrow can be turned to joy.

Last Sunday I was speaking in a church where there was a Christian family that had just lost their teenage daughter in a tragic car accident. Shawna Elford was a Christian teenager who was always reaching out to help others. She had stopped along the side of the road to help a motorist who had gotten into a small accident, and as she crossed the road she was hit by an oncoming car and knocked into unconsciousness. She was in a coma for nine days, and she went to be with the Lord last weekend. Last Sunday morning the parents and family of Shawna Elford were in the church where I was speaking. I can't begin to tell you what an encouragement her folks and family were because of their strength in Christ. Yes, of course there were tears and sorrow, but their sorrow was not like the sorrow of those who have no hope. What made the difference? The resurrection of Christ! They know that Shawna is alive today in heaven with the Lord Himself, and they know that they will see Shawna again.

This is no wishful thinking, folks, it's fact -- because of the resurrection of Christ! He conquered death. The Lord Jesus is alive today, therefore, your sorrow can be turned to joy!