



Lesson 11 February 13th, 2021

Mary Magdalene: A Faithful Disciple

Study Scripture – Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18

Background Scripture – Luke 8; Mark 15; John 20

Key Verse:

Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God.

And the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.

Luke 8:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture is structured to teach the fundamental lesson found in Proverbs chapter 8 which reads: I love them that love me: and those that seek me early shall find me”.

That of course is a wonderful promise, and it speaks about wisdom in a personification which of course refers ultimately to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The importance therefore of a strong devotion to the Lord is made clear in our Study.

We should never forget the instruction with the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father, and that the Father anointed Him to be the Savior of the world. Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ therefore automatically brings immense benefits and blessings which will result in eternal life. The Father loves His Son and loves those who love His Son.

We are therefore now looking at one who loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus became a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. One dictionary definition of a disciple is “An active follower of a leader or movement, religious or otherwise”.

Another definition which is relevant to our Study Lesson states:

“In Christianity, disciple primarily refers to a dedicated follower of Jesus. This term is found in the New Testament only in the Gospels and Acts. In the ancient world, a disciple is a follower or adherent of a teacher. It is not the same as being a student in the modern sense. A disciple in the ancient biblical world activity imitated both the life and teaching of the Master. It was a deliberate apprenticeship which makes the fully formed disciple a living copy of the Master. The New Testament records many followers of Jesus during his ministry. Some disciples were given a mission such as the ‘little Commission’, the ‘Commission of the 70’ in Luke’s Gospel, the ‘Great Commission’ after the resurrection of Jesus, or the conversion of Paul, making them apostles, charged with proclaiming the gospel of the Good News to the world. Jesus emphasized that being his disciples would be costly”.

The main person in our Study was very important for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is clearly stated in the synoptic Gospels that she and some other women were responsible for much of the needs of our Lord, giving them financial help. It is clearly stated that Mary Magdalene among others gave to Jesus of their substance. They would have had resources personally.

Besides that, given the culture of the time, it seemed strange that the Messenger of the living and now Risen Messiah would be a woman, instead of one of the more important disciples or apostles like Peter or John.

She is not only the disciple who was the messenger of the “empty tomb”, but she is also the messenger of the risen Messiah. This is an incredibly important role that God chose for her to play.

So, Mary is obviously a critically important person in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the reason for this will help us to a great extent in our Christian life so that we will be successful in that life.

It is of primary importance that we look at Mary's devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be well for us to do the same.

This of course is a life dominated by love. It would be well for us to do the same.

Once saved her life was given wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be well for us to do the same.

Then she ministered of her substance to the Lord. It goes without saying that we should do the same.

Then she was almost everywhere that Jesus was. After she met Jesus and was delivered from bondage, she followed Him closely, was clearly at the Crucifixion, followed to see where Jesus was buried, was at the tomb of Jesus weeping but ready to serve Him in whatever capacity she could, met with Him, with the disciples, and was obviously there with the male and female disciples on the day of Pentecost.

It was therefore no accident that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene for Mary was a person dominated by love for Jesus Christ and it showed everywhere when we look at her life for she attached herself to the Lord Jesus from the time she came to know Him.

So, what about the other disciples who also loved Jesus but who went into hiding when Jesus ran into trouble? They trusted that it was He that would have redeemed them but yet they went home in spite of the remarkable reports that had come to them. Even Peter and John looked at the tomb, were disturbed at seeing the empty tomb but then went home. But Mary, because she was dominated by a love and passion for the Lord Jesus Christ, went to the tomb and wept.

She therefore stands as an example for us in our relationship to Jesus.



Note her importance. We are not surprised at the very many stories that have arisen to make fun of the constancy of her faith and her love for Jesus Christ.

She was clearly one of the unlikeliest of persons to be the messenger of the resurrected and appearing Savior. So, her character has to be attacked and made fun of. Her morality had to be brought into question.

Some believe that she was a maladjusted person from whom seven Devils had been cast out and so she should never have been selected to be the one to bring the “wonderful good news” to the other disciples.

Some tried to link her with immorality since they believe that immorality and demonic affliction are always linked together. Besides that, the Talmud stated that Magdala was a city that was famous for its harlotry and therefore some would say Mary was a harlot and an immoral person. One writer states on this matter:

“In fact it became very popular and in the 4th through the 6th centuries evangelists and others who taught the word loved to lay great stress upon the fact that Mary had been an immoral person and probably a harlot and out of this have grown a number of the representations which the artistes have made of this woman. They have painted her as an auburn-haired woman who staggers out of a house of shame, weeping and sobbing, and falls at the feet of Jesus.

Now this, of course, is not found in the word of God.

There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that Mary was immoral at all but nevertheless this has been tradition... as far as the word of God is concerned there is not any evidence whatsoever that Mary Magdalene was an immoral person and that this is explanation of the seven Devils who went out of her”.

There are all kinds of other foolish speculations about Mary and whether or not she was unbalanced, or a paranoid schizophrenic with complications from seven manic-depressive cycles.

The only thing the Bible tells us was that she was demon possessed and that God through Jesus released her from bondage.

But it is also felt that there was an incident where Jesus was anointed with very expensive ointment by a woman early in Jesus' ministry in the house of Simon the Pharisee and she was weeping, kissing, and wiping Jesus' feet with unbound hair obviously very grateful for the repentance and the deliverance she had experienced. In that incident there was no condemnation. The woman in this picture some feel was Mary Magdalene though this is not specifically stated.

It has been pointed out that she is mentioned before Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward and so she was apparently of gentle birth and with considerable financial means because she and other women supported the Lord Jesus and the disciples that went around with Him. But despite this, before she met Jesus she suffered. It is noteworthy that the Scriptures are silent about her past and gives us no detail of her healing and her conversion.

She joined the group of devoted women who followed. This was a custom in Israel and some women followed Jewish rabbis and supported them.



It is most important as we look at this Study carefully to pay special attention to the fact that a single word from Jesus, when He called her name 'Miriam', changed her from weeping to wanting to cling to Jesus. Just a word from Jesus was a word that transformed. This brings to mind the teaching of the importance of hearing the voice of Jesus and rejecting all other voices which are designed to mislead. In John 10:27 Jesus, in speaking about the shepherd and the porter of the fold says:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me". And again, in 10:3

"To him the porter openeth and the sheep Hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out for they know his voice. And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice".

The voice of Jesus has a distinctive quality, and it marks Him out as your Savior. May you know how to hear His voice and recognize it as belonging to Him.

But though she was a devoted disciple her picture of the work of Jesus the Messiah like that of the other disciples, was not quite up to par for instead of feeling joy at the empty tomb there was nothing but sorrow. She too did not have a complete understanding though she had faith in Jesus.

Note therefore that when you are awakened from doubt, sickness, or even demon possession, the words of Scripture must define for you what the events happening around you mean. Once healed by Jesus you must know His voice and follow Him. The stories about you do not matter.

Follow the example of Mary Magdalene. Devote yourself to Jesus in gratitude and thanksgiving.

THE TEXT

Luke 8:1-3

Verse 1. We should understand that Christ made His business in life that of preaching. It is said that He was indefatigable in this area. After this He would go about doing good works. In the course of His life, the end of one good work was the beginning of another. He did not confine Himself to one place but delivered the message to all within His sphere of travel. He tried to reach areas where He had not delivered His message before, to towns, cities, rural lands, all that He could get to.

This was obviously a teaching moment to the disciples that followed Him, to ensure that after He was gone that they would realize that the Gospel must go to everyone, and everywhere.

He preached the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God, and that it was now among them. His message to men revealed that God is indeed willing to take all those under His protection that were willing to turn their allegiance to Him. The glad tidings to the world gives hope. It gives hope of being reformed and reconciled to their Creator and Sustainer.



These lessons were not only for the people Christ encountered on His journey but lessons that those who traveled with Him would have to learn so they could pass them along. The Twelve are counted in that number, as they had to learn how to preach and eventually would go to places that Christ may not have been able to go.

Verse 2 & 3. Also with Jesus were certain women, who frequently attended His ministry and ministered to Him of their substance. Now this is meant to imply that some of these women had some financial means with which they decided to support Jesus' ministry. There are some select individuals that the Bible does name, who were zealously affected to the doctrine of Christ and thought themselves bound in justice to encourage it, having themselves found benefit, and in charity, hoping that many others might find benefit by it too!

The history of these women is they had been Christ's patients, and were the monuments of His power and mercy. Some were healed by Him of evil spirits and infirmities. Some of them had been troubled in mind, of having a melancholy disposition; others of them were afflicted in the body, and He had been to them a powerful healer.

Who else do you know who has control over both the body and the mind? Only Jesus is the Great Physician, and He can heal both body and soul. It was in their interest to study and support this Christ!

We and also those before us do not wish to return to our former state, and so we are bound in interest to attend to Jesus, and we are bound in gratitude to serve Him and His gospel.

One of these special women was Mary Magdalene. Some say she was the Magdalene in which a number (seven) of spirits were cast out. Some suppose she was a sinner (Luke 7:37). Whatever her identity was, she recognized herself as a sinner who found redemption in the sight of Christ. There is no despair in her movements, for with her conversion she more earnestly studies to be of more value to Christ. She is the one noticed observing Him at the Cross and at His sepulcher. It seems this Mary Magdalene amongst others had followed Jesus from Galilee.

Mary Magdalene role in salvation history is very important. She was mentioned more than 15 times, more often than any of the male followers of Jesus Christ. Only Jesus' closest companions like Peter, James, and John are mentioned more often. She therefore has excited much interest but apart from that one famous hour outside the tomb of Jesus we know very little about Mary Magdalene. But despite that she is a vitally important link in the story of the resurrection of Jesus and she was granted a remarkable privilege of being a critically important messenger.

Among the other many women who followed Jesus and supported Him not many are specifically noted. One woman of note was Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. It appears that in this moment she was a widow and had been left in good circumstances. Most likely her husband had received the gospel in Herod's court, and she had benefitted from that encounter herself. Now she had taken on the role as both a hearer of Christ and a contributor to Him.



There were many of them that ministered to Christ of their substance. These women were devoted disciples.

It is important to note that our Saviour humbled Himself to the point that He needed this assistance, and it is because of His great humility and condescension that He accepted it. The lesson to learn is that we need not scorn to be beholden to the charity of neighbours, when Providence has brought us into difficulties or straits, but let us ask and be thankful for the assistance rendered for it is as a favour to us. Christ demonstrates that He would rather be beholden to His known friends for maintaining Himself and His disciples than be burdensome to strangers in the cities and the villages where He went to preach. His disciples were of course commanded to accept help from those that responded favorably to their Gospel when they went on their missionary journeys.

These women that followed Jesus and supported Him were not playing a subordinate or demeaning role for their support was essential and a godsend to the Twelve. Many of these women were healed of all kinds of sicknesses and mental distress and so were grateful. They will receive great rewards in the Kingdom of God for their gratitude. The fact that they are all not named in Scripture does not mean that God the Father has not taken special note of what they did to His beloved Son and all the other disciples.

One cannot forget that tremendous impact many women have had because they faithfully supported the work of Christ over the past centuries, have given of their resources and have raised resources and in addition have given witness to the blessings they have received from the Lord Jesus Christ. Many missionaries would not have been able to go out into the field without the support of the many women who have enabled them. We know that women have been active in supporting and sheltering homeless persons, feeding many hungry. They have been powerful in establishing and maintaining Christian Fellowship and they have kept many church doors open because of their generosity and their work. They have followed in the steps of Mary Magdalene and so many have learned of the Lord Jesus Christ because of their efforts.

It is the duty of those who are taught in the word to support them who teach them in all good things. Those who are liberal and cheerful in supporting the ministers of the Gospel honour the Lord with their substance and bring a blessing upon them.

Mark 15:40

Verse 40: In the Study Lesson, we are called to support the work of the Lord. Worshippers or disciples of Jesus at the time of His death were important for certain reasons.

The Gospel of Mark makes it quite clear that at the Cross there were women who because of their position in the culture could only look on what was happening from afar. Among them first listed prominently was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome.



These were the faithful followers and disciples of Jesus from Galilee. They had come to Jerusalem along with many other women who along with them ministered to Jesus.

But we should note that even though this awful event was happening humanly speaking, there were some bright spots. People did not understand that this Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ was according to the express purpose of God the Father for He wanted to save men and women that came to Jesus. Their task at the Resurrection was to teach the nation that the Messiah had come and shed His blood to save men and women. Women therefore would have an important part to play in witnessing about Jesus.

Firstly, we have the centurion who witnessing Jesus crying out and giving up the ghost, testifying that Jesus Christ was dead. But more importantly, he proclaimed that this was indeed the Son of God. This would also be an important point as this particular moment and testimony would again be drawn upon in the near future.

Another point of support to the body of evidence that Jesus had died was from Pilate himself. Pilate had marveled that Jesus was dead so quickly and had called the aforementioned Centurion to confirm this fact to him. This was important as another supporter of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathaea had come for the body of Christ. Pilate before releasing the body would make sure that Jesus was dead so that he would not be made to look the fool if Jesus were seen alive walking about after some time, healed of the wounds. In this instance the Centurion testified to Pilate and Pilate was convinced based on the experience of the Centurion that Jesus was dead and released the body to Joseph.

Joseph himself, a prominent Sanhedrin council member, followed Jesus in secret up to this point. It is thought that he was there and silent when the council sentenced Jesus to death. However, now at the death of Jesus, he was not ashamed to identify with Jesus in His death, and he felt it important to his Master to honour Him and procure the body for a proper burial.

In this instance Joseph served Christ in the way that no one else could have in procuring the body. Peter had sworn he would not leave Jesus and even in the short run, that did not work out well, but lessons were learned, and we saw how Peter's life served Christ. Others like Nicodemus and the women did not hesitate to serve Him in love even though they were quiet like Joseph but were always there.

Now, in terms of constant support for Christ, we see that some women are mentioned consistently. During His ministry, and during His time on and at the Cross, these faithful disciples were there with him. At the burial of Christ and later when Jesus appeared to His disciples gathered in their private quarters, there were always the women who followed Jesus there in the midst willing to serve.

John 20:10-18

Summary of Verses 1-10

Mary Magdalene, a woman, a disciple, was the first of Jesus' followers to the tomb, on what we would call early Sunday morning, while it is still dark. She found the great stone that was



blocking the entrance to the tomb rolled away and the tomb empty. There can be no doubt that Mary Magdalene had a fervent and constant affection for her Lord Jesus Christ. Her devotion to Him was such that she made sure she was the first one at the tomb, while the other disciples cowered in fear.

Stricken with grief she appears to have jumped to the hasty conclusion that Jesus' body had been removed from the tomb and did not wait to investigate. Grief stricken she rushed off and informed Peter and John of the distressing news, that Jesus' body had been taken away and 'they' did not know where the body was. Peter and John hurried over to the tomb and they also found it empty. Curiously the burial clothes were neatly folded and orderly placed.

There was no mention of the promised resurrection by any of the three visitors. Peter and John show stoic resignation and return to their homes. John comments on their behaviour with the note that they were as yet still ignorant of the Scriptures that spoke of His resurrection. This lack of understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures however cannot be interpreted as an excuse.

John seems to indicate from his comment in verse 8 that when he saw what was in the tomb, namely, the state of the graveclothes not scattered around and arranged in an orderly way, he 'believed' that Jesus had risen from the dead. We know that Peter was "wondering" (Luke 24: 12) at what had happened, and it is very likely that there must have been some discussion between Peter and John. We do know that it was only after Jesus appeared to the disciples that they came to fully understand the Old Testament prophecies.

Meanwhile Mary Magdalene breaks out into deep, uncontrolled sobbing.

It must be said here that the behavior of these disciples including Mary, though understandable, is not what Jesus expected of them.

We should note that Jesus expects certain behavior from us given our exposure to the Scriptures. There is a time for crying and lamentation, but there is a time for understanding which should have ruled out crying on this occasion.

Instead, there should have been rejoicing. An empty tomb, along with unbelief and lamentation was not appropriate. Each of Christ's disciples still showed they have some growth to achieve. However, the Bible documents the growth of the men and women, and there is no doubt by Christ's interaction with Mary Magdalene that she will be that great steward for Christ.

Verse 11: Mary remained at the tomb in unrestrained sobbing, giving full course to her tears. Her tears spoke volumes about her love for her Lord and presents an admirable picture of how believers should desire the conscious, tangible presence of the Lord in our lives. It is not unusual for desperate seekers to go over ground they had just covered or check the last known location of an object over and over and so she stooped and looked into the tomb.



It did not seem to appear to Mary that Jesus was raised, her interest was to locate the body and give it a proper burial.

Jews in those days customarily visited the burial place for up to three days after the death. They believed that a dead person's spirit stayed in the vicinity of the tomb for three days hovering over the body but on the fourth day this spirit departed and there was no use to visit the tomb of the one that had died.

In this case however we know that the Sabbath regulations prohibited such visits on the Sabbath, so the earliest Mary could visit was at sundown or what we would call Saturday evening, when the Sabbath was ended and the first day of the week would begin.

Mark's Gospel states that she visited "there early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen", but John tells us that it was still dark. We do not therefore know whether Jesus had been raised during the Sabbath day or whether He was raised from the dead as soon as the Sabbath day ended and the first day of the week began. One writer comments on this very controversial matter:

"None of the Gospels (see Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1) speak of this is the third day after the crucifixion, but rather as the first day of the week. Perhaps they want to emphasize the new date ushered in at Jesus' resurrection".

We note however that there had been many attempts to harmonize the belief that Jesus was buried on a Friday and rose on a Sunday. It is alleged without any serious scholarship that in Jewish thinking any part of a day was considered to be twenty-four hours, a day and a night. Jesus had been in the grave part of Friday, that was the equivalent of a day and a night; He was in the tomb all day Saturday; that is, a day and a night. And then part of Sunday, a day and a night, according to this alleged Jewish reckoning of time. It is felt that this is the only way in which we can harmonize the various statements in Scripture that after three days Jesus should rise from the dead. Of course, this position ignores the specific and concrete statement in Genesis 1 and in other parts of the Old Testament Scriptures which define a "day" and "a night". The problem for these people is that Jesus made it clear that just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, so Jesus would be in the grave three days and three nights. Reconciling this statement of Jesus with their interpretation of the day of the death and the day of the resurrection has proven to be difficult. Hence, we see the introduction of the alleged Jewish modification of how time, day and night can be counted.

But ignoring that controversy we are told that Mary Magdalene had been accompanied by Joanna and Mary the mother of James and visited with spices earlier to again anoint the body of Jesus even though Nicodemus had taken care of the anointing according to Chapter 19: 38-40. They had left (Mark 16:1) for the door to the tomb was closed and so Mary expecting the door was still closed had come grieving to pay her respects since her devotion to Jesus was considerable. Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 spoke of this earlier visit.



But it was on a later visit then that she saw that the tomb's door was open, and she wept as she stooped down and looked into the tomb. Mary advised Peter and John and they came to confirm her findings and then they left.

Verse 12: Angels have been present at pivotal moments in the life of Jesus. They were present at His birth, strengthened Him in Gethsemane for the ordeal of the Cross and are present at His resurrection. The position of the angels appears to be more than just random as they appear to be keeping guard or waiting in attendance.

Their presence should have alerted Mary that she did not need to fear. They were there and the guards were not there, so there must be something peculiar way going on, Mary should have thought something strange was happening. But she was completely distraught. She had before rushed and told Peter and John who came and inspected the empty tomb. They left after their inspection. But Mary returned because she had a one-track mind, and she was obviously thinking about what she had gained from knowing Jesus and would weep because He was no longer with her. She then noticed that two Angels in white were there, one sitting at the place where the head was and the other sitting at the feet where the body of Jesus had been put.

Verse 13: Unlike Mary the angels knew this was not an occasion for weeping. Their question seems to imply a mild rebuke, that there is nothing to cry about. On the other hand, the question might hold some sympathy for Mary. Hers' were tears of love and of sorrow, but they were needless tears, based on false assumptions.

It has to be noted however that even though the Angels were there they saw Mary's actions and were a bit perplexed about what Mary was doing. Remember that these were elect angels who God the Father had confirmed that they would remain in fellowship with God and so they do not know of the experience of redemption. We know that angels are extremely interested in redemption but they are puzzled by it and so they would not quite understand how Mary felt and how and why she was reacting that way. One writer explains:

"In fact, the Apostle Peter would say in his first letter when he talks about preaching the Gospel, he says, "Which things the angels desire to look into". And Paul tells us that God teaches the Angels the manifold wisdom of God through the Church of Jesus Christ. So as amazing as it may seem, we are the instrumentality by which the angels learn the manifold wisdom of God. They see

His justice and his righteousness, and they see evidence of his love. And they see the power of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the fact that sinners, rebellious individuals by the preaching of the gospel, are transformed in their life, literally often stop in their tracks and by the power of God for us to turn and become worshipers of the one against whom they had rebelled before. So, the Angels are concerned about spiritual things".

The angels knew that some of the rebellious angels are non-elect and so they had great difficulty in understanding salvation and redemption.



Whoever these men were, friend or foe, Mary Magdalene did not hesitate to call the man whose body had been in the tomb her Lord. She was not ashamed of admitting her love.

It appears she did not recognize the angels, as often in the Bible, angels simply look like men, so that their appearance alone would not reveal their true identity (see Genesis 18 and 19; Acts 1:10-11; Hebrews 13:2). Her tears might have also blurred her vision.

The two angels did not identify themselves as angels. Note that here there was not the normal fear which humans experience when talking to angels.

Mary's mindset sounded like hopeless despair and her tears wasted as she seemed to have forgotten all Jesus had said and how it came about that she called Him 'her Lord'. Despite her great love and devotion to Jesus, she suffered a great lack of faith. She assumed Jesus to still be dead, His body stolen and that she would not be able to find His body. Mary had likely come early to properly embalm the body and along with others administer a proper burial.

If Mary had remembered and known the real reason why the tomb was empty, she would not have been crying.

Mary sets the bar high as to the kind of love, the total devotion to the presence of Christ and the affection that results in tears and sobbing when we are separated from Christ, for even a little while. She sets an example for us to desire to be with Him, so that if we are ever separated from Him by sin, our hearts will be grieved to tears.

It is sometimes pointed out that the Gospels never shy away from pointing to how thick-headed the disciples were to the repeated teachings that Jesus gave about His death and resurrection. It was only when He actually died that they were convinced that His words about His death were true. Now it was the same thing over again.

Before we criticize Mary too much, we must accept that we are very much like her. When we are in great distress, the sky is falling in and everything is working against us, we Christians immediately forget all the promises of God, are anxious and upset and feel sorry for ourselves. We quickly forget the promises of God. Worst yet, when we see disaster staring us in the face, we scheme, plot and plan, even justify doing iniquity, in order to escape the consequences. This is being caught in the trap of Satan.

Verse 14: For some unknown reason, Mary turned around and then found herself face to face with Jesus but did not recognize Him. Some believe that the angels saw Jesus and were bowing, and Mary instinctively turned to see who else was there. She thought the person there was the Gardener.

Some commentators say that hair was in her eyes from crying. Others say that the tears blurred her vision from recognizing Him. Some say her lack of faith, not expecting Him caused her to not see Him. It appears there was something different about Jesus that made it impossible for her to recognize Him apart from His disclosure of who He was. In His post resurrection appearances, Jesus was not always immediately recognized. He was the same Lord, but apparently, He was so transformed that no one quickly recognized Him.



In Mark 16:12 when Jesus appeared unrecognized to two disciples, we are told He appeared in another form. Jesus' body was now different, he could eat fish and honeycomb but could also pass-through walls. (See Luke 24:13-16, 31; Matt.28:17, John 21:4)

Note, those who seek Christ with their whole heart will find Him.

The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart...Psalm 34:18.

Verse 15: Jesus asked the same question as the angels but added a second. Whom are you seeking? What are you doing here at this time of the morning? It was a reasonable question.

Jesus' questions hinted to Mary that He knew whom she sought. Jesus is turning her away from looking for a body and concentrating instead on finding someone. But Mary is relentless in her desire to recover the body. Likely she could not handle Jesus' body by herself, but she abandoned reason and pleaded with Him to convey any information He may have to her. She even tried to put the "gardener" at ease, asserting that it would be no trouble to Him, for she would take the body away from wherever it was.

Note, true love thinks it can do more than it can and makes light of difficulties.

Her love was certainly strong. This was true affection. Nothing would divert her from her goal which was to find the body of Jesus.

Note carefully during all her affliction He was right there, unseen, but right there. In addition, the angels of God were right there, though unseen. Her tremendous affection led to Jesus responding to her need. One writer tells us that we are no different in our thoughts and attitudes from Mary. He states:

"Whom seekest thou? He points her to someone. So often that is our response in spiritual experiences. We think of things when ideally our Lord would like us to keep our thoughts upon him, because it's a personal relationship in the final analysis that is important".

Verse 16: Jesus used the Aramaic form of her name Miriam. This would be the name of familiarity, the name which her family and friends knew her by and the name which He had always used in speaking to her.

Clearly Mary heard in that one word the voice she knew so well. It must have also been spoken in the manner she knew well. In this one-word Jesus conveyed His love and compassion. So, we remind you again the words of Jesus:

"I tell you the solemn truth, the one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. 5 They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice" (John 10:1-4).

Rabboni ... This is a Hebrew word that literally means my great master. It was one of the titles given to Jewish teachers. This title was given under three forms: (a) Rab, or master, the lowest



degree of honour. (b) Rabbi, my master, a title of higher dignity. (c) Rabboni, my great master, the most honourable of all. It was a title reserved for only those of great eminence. It was a spontaneous expression of her joy and an acknowledgment of Him as her Lord and Master.

Note, Jesus knows us personally, our names. We do not have an indifferent Saviour, or a cold, calculating Master; we have a warm, intimate and loving Christ.

This was the same voice that reached out to her in her hopeless state of tragedy, cleansed her and made her whole. She had listened to that voice teach her and the other disciples so many times, and now she heard the voice again.

It only needed one word, a tender word, to open her eyes to His identity. Just saying this woman's name changed everything for her, and the Gospel, the good news became personal. The good news was meant just for her.

For her Jesus just saying her name meant that He knew her as a person, an individual. She was not just a part of the crowd. She mattered to Him personally. He cared for the specific person named Mary Magdalene, and He had come back to life just for her.

Everything changed for Mary. She was transformed by this personal encounter. She was now ready to be an evangelist to her brethren. She could tell them that God had not rejected them, and He knew them by name, loving them each individually, and that He had a purpose for each one of them.

Verse 17: Upon opening her eyes, Jesus expects that she would be overjoyed to see Him and would greet each other in their customary fashion. However, Jesus stops her, and lets her know that the situation is now different. Understandably Mary was elated to see Christ that she forgot herself and the state of glory into which He was now entering, which would preclude any affectionate embrace of Him.

As He directs her not to touch or literally cling to Him, and explains the reason why to her, it is an important clarification. Christ knew that many of His followers still held out hope that He would establish a temporal kingdom and even more so with His resurrection. However, Christ confirms to Mary that He will be leaving as He had mentioned before to be at the right-hand side of His Father. He is not only their Messiah, the Christ, but now more than ever He is our Advocate to God the Father, and so the former familiarity she and the other disciples had with Him must be put aside, even though He opens up a new level of relationship between them.

Christ forbids her to dote upon His bodily presence, to set her heart on this, or expect its continuance, and leads her to the spiritual converse and communion which she should have with Him after He was ascended to His Father; for the greatest joy of His resurrection was that it was a step towards His ascension. As before His death, so now after His resurrection, He continues to stress His intentions to leave and go to the Father, but before that there are things



that must be done. To this He gives Mary a message to deliver to the rest of the disciples, because this is a day of good tidings, which must be passed along to others.

Christ's message is specific, and highlights two things, that He has risen, and secondly that He plans to ascend. Jesus said that she should Go to my brethren, with the message. Christ is not ashamed to call His disciples brethren, not just friends.

To us today this is also true, showing the new level of intimacy we have entered into, not just with Jesus, but with the Father above. Christ has entered into His glory and is now declared to be the Son of God with greater power than ever, yet He owns His disciples as His brethren, and expresses Himself with more tender affection to them than before. Notice in calling them brethren. Christ does not elevate Himself way above us, He is not haughty. Yes, He is great and above us and we should address Him as such, but He has always will be always be close to us as a brother.

Even though of late His disciples had lately carried themselves very disingenuously towards Him, He forgives, He forgets, and does not upbraid.

Mary Magdalene one would say is now most favoured. This was her reward for her constancy in adhering to Christ and enquiring after Him. Perhaps even a tacit rebuke to the apostles, who had not been so close as she was in attending on the dying Jesus; nor so early as she was in meeting the risen Jesus, so she becomes an apostle to the apostles.

The message itself is clear, I ascend to my Father. Christ stresses the relationship to the Father above and insinuates that that is also now our relationship too. This results from our union with Christ and is of an unspeakable comfort to believers. Christ says, He is my Father, and our Father, my God, and your God. This is very expressive of the near relation that subsists between Christ and believers. He that sanctifieth, and those that are sanctified, are both one; for they agree in one, Heb. 2:11. Here we have such an advancement of Christians, and such a condescension of Christ, we are brought together, we are one body.

It is the great dignity of believers that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in Him, their Father. There is a vast difference between the respective foundations of the relations; He is Christ's Father by eternal generation, ours by a gracious adoption; yet even this warrants us to call Him, as Christ did, Abba, Father. This gives a reason why Christ called them brethren (and us also), because His Father was their Father.

Christ was now ascending to appear as an Advocate with the Father, with His Father, and therefore we know He will prevail in all thing with our Father, and therefore we may know He will prevail for us.

It is the great condescension of Christ that He is pleased to own the believer's God for His God: My God, and your God; mine, that He may be yours; the God of the Redeemer, to support Him (Ps. 89:26), that He might be the God of the redeemed, to save them.



The summary of the New Covenant is that God will be to us a God. Christ being the surety and head of the Covenant who is primarily dealt with deserves our worship. And believers who are only in and through Him as His spiritual seed, this covenant-relation fastens first upon Him, God becomes His God, and so ours; we are partaking of a divine nature, Christ's Father is our Father; and He is partaking of the human nature, our God is His God.

Christ saying, He is yet to ascend should be taken as a word of caution to these disciples, not to expect the continuance of His bodily presence on earth, nor the setting up of His temporal kingdom among men, which they dreamed of. "No, tell them, I am risen, not to stay with them, but to go on their errand to heaven." Thus, those who are raised to a spiritual life, in conformity to Christ's resurrection, must reckon that they rise to ascend; they are quickened with Christ that they may sit with Him in heavenly places.

We are not to think that this earth is to be our home and rest, we are just sojourners here. We are now born from heaven, we are bound for heaven, and as such our eye and the eye and aim must be upon another world, and this must be ever upon their hearts. A word of comfort to them, and to all that shall believe in Him through their word, He was then ascending, He is now ascended to His Father, and our Father. This was His advancement, He ascended to receive those honours and powers which were to be the recompense of His humiliation. He says it with triumph that those who love Him may rejoice. This is our advantage, for Christ ascended as a conqueror, leading captivity captive for us (Ps. 68:18), He ascended as our forerunner, to prepare a place for us, and to be ready to receive us.

Christ's words, I ascend to my God and your God, include a promise of our resurrection, in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; for Christ had proved the resurrection of the dead from these words, I am the God of Abraham, Mt. 22:32. So that Christ here insinuates, "As He is my God, and hath therefore raised me, so He is your God, and will therefore raise you, and be your God, Rev. 21:3. Because I live, you shall live also. I now ascend, to honour my God, and you shall ascend to Him as your God.

Verse 18: Verse 18 details Mary Magdalene's faithful report of what she had seen and heard to the disciples. She came and told the disciples, who she found together, that she had seen the risen Lord. Peter and John had left her seeking Him carefully with tears and would not stay to seek Him with her. Now she comes to tell them that she had found Him, or more accurately, Christ had found her, and to rectify the mistake she had led them into by enquiring after the dead body, for now she found it was a living body and a glorified one.

She had found what she sought, and also that which was infinitely better, she had joy in her sight of the Master herself, and was willing to communicate of her joy, for she knew it would be good news to them.

When God comforts us, it is with this design, that we may comfort others. And as she told them what she had seen, and also what she had heard, that being the Lord is alive, which is to be



taken as a good token for He had spoken these things unto her as a message to be delivered to them, and she delivered it faithfully.

Those that are acquainted with the word of Christ themselves should communicate their knowledge for the good of others, and not grudge that others should know as much as they do. All this is done as a blessing to believers, to the family of God.

CONCLUSION

Mary was appointed to be the first witness of the Resurrection. Jesus would therefore go to the Father for her benefit and the benefit of the other disciples. Then she would be able to cling to Him. She was given a ministry for the Cross was not a defeat but a victory. She might have done all kinds of regrettable things in the past but now Jesus was not afraid or ashamed to call her one of the brethren.

So here we have someone who mourned but by the grace of God had been brought into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and had become a missionary of the grace of God.

We therefore pray that we will remember that we have a duty as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those that have experienced the redemption brought by the Good Shepherd must make Him known.

It is good to have a one-track mind if you're one-track mind is for the Lord Jesus Christ. So, let us not look at things that contain only problems and puzzles instead of looking at the one that can solve all of our problems.

When you have personal experiences with Jesus you will come to know His voice and it will be impossible for you to miss the tone of His voice.

So go. Your unfinished works must begin. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and all the help you need has been provided.

Be like Mary Magdalene, dominated by a love and passion for the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not delay. Be like Mary, who immediately went and did the work of the witness for the resurrected Christ.

