

T R I N I T Y
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D A L L A S

The Sermon

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John 20:11-18

"What Commitment Looks Like"

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TRANSCRIPT

We're in the gospel of John. And if you have your Bible with you, I want to begin by reading what will be our passage that we will be looking at today, John chapter 20; we'll be looking at verses 11 through 18. And we've come in this portion of the gospel of John immediately following the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we have looked at the resurrection. In fact, last Lord's Day we saw the resurrection of Christ. And so we now come to one of the great responses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it involves Mary Magdalene. So, the title of this message is "What Commitment Looks Like. What Commitment Looks Like." And I want to begin reading in verse 11, then I'll pray, and then we'll look carefully together at the passage.

But beginning in verse 11, this is God's word: "But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And 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.'

"When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 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 taken Him away, tell me where you have laid

Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."' Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her." This is the reading of God's infallible word. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, what a gift You have given to us, to give us Your written word, and how You have preserved the Bible down through the centuries, this perfectly accurate account of truth; and in this case, what took place two thousand years ago. Were it not for this record we would not know what took place after the resurrection. And for our hearts to read this and see this, it excites us. And we are grateful that Mary Magdalene was so committed to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so as we look at this today, I pray that You would use it to challenge us to be all the more resolute and committed to Christ. Make us as Mary Magdalene was, one fully dedicated to Christ. Lord, would You bless everyone who is in this building and everyone who is watching by livestream? Open the windows of heaven and pour out the fullness of your blessing upon us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses Mary Magdalene really becomes a picture, an example for us of what true commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ looks like. You see, Mary didn't have just truth in her head and it just stayed intellectually in her head, but it had worked its way down into her heart and into her soul and it had energized her life, and it had really welded and forged a commitment to Christ that we see in this passage. And really the key, as we look at this passage, to her commitment is who she understood Jesus Christ to be. It's mentioned twice in this passage, once in verse 13 and once in verse 18, as she refers to Jesus as, "My Lord."

You'll note that in verse 13: "They have taken away my Lord." And then in verse 18, she said to the disciples when she ran to them, "I have seen the Lord." And for Jesus to be her Lord very simply means that she lives her entire life in service of her Lord. She lives her whole life to please the

Lord. She's come to a point where she has turned away from living for this world and she is now living for the Lord; and what He teaches is her command. In the example that He has set for her is the very pattern and footsteps that she follows. And so we're not surprised to see her here searching for the body of Jesus to further prepare His body for burial, because He's her Lord.

If you're a Christian, Jesus is your Lord. Every true believer, every true disciple, everyone who has been born again by the Spirit of God, you have Jesus Christ as your Lord. And He's now the Master of your life. He's now the Ruler of your life; and He sets the course, He sets the agenda, He sets the direction for everything about your life. You're no longer in control. In fact, you're in the back seat, He's in the front seat. In fact, He's behind the steering wheel and He's got the roadmap and He driving and directing your life into the very center of His will. And so Mary is one who's a true believer, because Jesus is her Lord.

Now by way of introduction, what do we know about Mary Magdalene? What do we know about her? Well, Mary came from the town of Magdala. That's why she's called Magdalene, it means Mary of Magdala. And Magdala was to the north of Jerusalem on the Sea of Galilee on the western shore, the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Tiberias.

And she was a woman who had a very soiled past. She had lived a very sinful life. In fact, her life before meeting the Lord was so sinful that Luke 8:2 tells us that she was possessed by seven demons, not just one; she was demon-possessed seven times over. And that would tell us that because of the sin that she was involved in that she had opened her life up to all of the forces of the kingdom of darkness, and they just came parading into her life and took over her life and dominated her life under the power of demons. And when she met Jesus, Jesus expelled those demons. Jesus sent them away, and she gave her life to Jesus Christ.

She was converted to Christ. She was a true believer; and at that moment, Jesus became the Lord of her life. And she was so, so committed to Jesus.

You need to know this: she was so committed to Jesus that she was one of a small handful of women who financially underwrote the ministry of Jesus. That's in Luke 8:2-3. And a handful of women, and Mary Magdalene was one of those, they personally supported the disciples and the Lord Jesus Christ.

She was all in with the Lord, and she followed the Lord. She followed Him from way up north the Sea of Galilee, she followed Him all the way down to the south to Jerusalem, away from home. She just couldn't let Jesus out of her sight. And we don't know all the interaction that took place, but we do know that as Jesus came to the end of His life, as He was arrested, as He stood those six trials, and as He was crucified, we know that all of Jesus' other disciples, they just fled for the hills. They hid behind closed doors. But not Mary Magdalene.

There was one disciple who stayed loyal to Jesus in the tough time and that's the author of this book, the gospel of John. And so John, no doubt, even had interaction with Mary Magdalene in this close proximity surrounding the end of His life. And Mary Magdalene, when everyone else was running out, she came running in, and she stood at the foot of the cross. She stood there with Jesus' mother, and she was with Him all the way to the end, because He has changed her life. He's given her a new life. He has expelled the demons. He has washed the sin away. The heavy burden of sin has been removed from her shoulders.

And so she's there at the cross and she sees Him actually die. She hears those last words, "It is finished. Father, receive My spirit." And she's still there when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus go to Pilate and ask for the body of Christ to be taken down from the cross so they can bury Him. Mary Magdalene obviously must have followed them to the tomb where they buried Jesus. She wanted to know where "my Savior, my Lord is," even when He's dead. And so she sees where the tomb is, that's why she knows which tomb to go to.

And so now it is Sunday morning. It is dark, and she's come to the tomb with Mary the mother of Jesus. And we pick up this narrative. But what we see here is a woman who is sold out to the lordship of Jesus Christ. We love this woman because of what loyalty and allegiance she has to the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we look at this today, I want this to be an encouragement to you. I want it to be a challenge to you. No matter what your past is, it doesn't matter how you start the race, what matters is how you end the race. And it doesn't matter what took place in your life in the past, how soiled and how sinful it may have been, when you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you become a new creature, you're given a new start, you're in a new race, and you can end strong. And that is the case with Mary, so much so she finds herself in the Bible to be set forth as an example to each and every one of us.

So I want us to observe Mary. I want to be like Mary; I want you to be like Mary. And so I have five headings I want to set before you as we walk through this passage. And I want you to note, first, Mary's devotion. That's in verse 11, Mary devotion. As this scene begins, we see Mary's – listen to this – undying devotion for her dying Savior. She has an undying devotion for her dying Savior.

So we begin in verse 11, "But Mary was standing outside the tomb." We know that this Mary refers to Mary Magdalene because she's mentioned as such in verse 1 and in verse 18. And she was standing outside the tomb. Now just to remind you, the tomb was carved out of the side of a mountain, and it was large enough for the whole family to be buried in in the proper time, and there would be a ledge that would be carved out of the side of the mountain inside the tomb. And Mary knows where they laid Jesus, and so she has come to this tomb. She's already been to this tomb once, and that was in verses 1 and following. And as she's at the tomb, she left and ran to tell Peter and John that, "He's not here." And they come running back, and they beat her back to the tomb, and there they see that the Lord is not in the tomb.

They leave; Mary now comes back for the second time to this tomb, and as she returns, she really has come. She has no idea Jesus has been raised from

the dead, she just wants Him to have all of the proper accessories of a rightful burial. I mean, two men have buried Him; we need a woman to make sure that the housekeeping is done correctly here. Only the men laughed.

But I want to tell you, wild horses could not have kept Mary away from this tomb. And we read, "She's weeping." She's weeping uncontrollably. She has heartbroken grief. It's bitter sorrow. She is shattered. I mean, we could say this is like an emotional meltdown for her. The One who has released her from her sins, the One who has dramatically altered her life, and now He's dead. And we read, "And so as she wept," and the idea here is she just kept weeping, she could not stop weeping. And we know why; because he who and she who is forgiven much, loves much.

And so, "She wept and stooped and looked inside the tomb." It would have been a small entrance short enough that a stone had been rolled in front of it. And Matthew tells us that an earthquake just rolled that stone away, not to let Jesus out, but to let Mary and the disciples in to see that He's been raised from the dead. "And she looked inside the tomb." She's looking for the dead body of Jesus.

So before we go any further, this is what devotion to Christ looks like, and what challenges me is that Mary is more devoted to Christ thinking He's dead than so often I can be knowing He's alive. It's Mary's devotion. You need to deepen your devotion to the Lord Jesus.

So, second, I want you to note Mary's discovery in verse 12, Mary's discovery. As Mary stoops to look inside the tomb she makes an amazing discovery, and we read in verse 12, "and she saw two angels in white." You talk about a discovery. I mean, can you imagine looking into your closet this morning at home and there's two angels in white in your closet? I mean, you would just be taken back by that.

And so she saw these two angels in white. And Mary does not know that they are angels, she just assumes that they're two men because they have assumed a humanlike form and appearance. They do not have wings here, despite whatever portraits you've seen, they are very humanlike. And, in fact, in Mark's gospel, Mark 16:5, they are referred to as young men: two young men, strong and able, and no doubt muscular. And in Matthew's gospel it says that their appearance was like lightning, that their clothing was white as snow. I mean, their face was almost glowing with the radiance of having been in the presence of God. And in Luke's gospel, cross-reference, it says that they are in dazzling clothing.

Well, I looked up this word "dazzling," and it just means flashing forth with light. And so this dark tomb is lit up with the face and the clothing of these two angels who have descended from the throne of grace and from the heights of heaven and have come into this tomb. And note the next word: "sitting." They're just sitting there as though they're waiting for Mary to come, as if they're waiting on a bus, as if they're waiting for Mary to come and for whoever else will be coming in. And the two angels, it says at the end of verse 12, "one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying." So they're like bookends on both ends of where the body had been laid on that ledge horizontal to the ground.

Though the body is no longer there, the linen wrappings are there, and the head covering has been folded up and is neatly placed there. By the way, how did you leave your bed this morning? And so, they're just seated there, one on both sides of where the body would have been. And what should strike us is how important the resurrection of Jesus Christ is from the dead, that there would be two angels dispatched from realms of glory, to descend down into this empty tomb. They were many spectacular events that took place during the life of the Lord Jesus Christ: Him walking on water, Him raising Lazarus from the dead. There's no mention of angels there. But this is so significant, that Jesus has conquered death, that Jesus now is the Prince of life, that Jesus now has the keys of the grave in His hand, that no one will enter or leave the grave apart from His sovereign authority. This is such a defining, significant moment, that there are two angels inside this tomb, as if to punctuate the importance of what just took place.

This leads now to, number three, Mary's despair, verse 13, Mary's despair. Mary still knows nothing of the resurrection of Jesus, she just remains in turmoil and distress. And so it says, "They said to her, the two angels said to her," - and by the way here, not only do they assume a humanlike body, but they can speak in human language, in understandable language, and they converse here with Mary, and they ask her this very simple question - 'Woman,' - which is a term of respect - 'why are you weeping?'" And this is actually a gentle rebuke as if to say, "Woman, get ahold of yourself. This is inappropriate. If you only knew now what you're about to find out in just a few moments you would not be weeping. And so, woman, why are you weeping?"

So, "She said to them, to the two angels, 'Because they have taken away my Lord. That's my Lord who's missing. My Lord's body is not here, my Lord's body has been taken someplace.'" And she does not know who or where, she can only assume when she says, "They have taken my Lord's body away," that she's referring to some grave robbers who have broken in and stolen the body of Jesus, because it becomes so controversial.

But what a statement of faith this is. "He's still my Lord. It doesn't matter how dark the circumstances are, it doesn't matter how bleak the outlook, it doesn't matter that He's been crucified and has been buried, He's still my Lord! And nothing will break the bond that I have with my Lord, not even death itself."

Now what does the word "Lord" mean? I think it's important that we understand what this means as she identifying Him as "my Lord." And by the way, the word "my" is very important. It's very personal, is it not? Jesus needs to be your personal Lord, not just your wife's Lord or your in-law's Lord or the church's Lord; you need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and He needs to be your Lord.

Now the word "Lord," it means Master, it means Ruler, it means Sovereign One. It means the One possessing all authority over a person's life, and

authority over all the circumstances of a person's life. And for her to identify Jesus as her Lord means that she has surrendered her life to Jesus Christ, that she is now in submission to the word of Jesus, that she is loyal to His person, she is committed to His kingdom, that she is sold out to His will. She's no longer living for herself with her own agenda and going her own way. No, "Jesus is Lord, and I now follow Him wherever He leads me." That's what it means for Jesus to be her Lord; though in the confusion of the moment she does not know that He's been raised from the dead.

But I want to underscore with you right now that Jesus must be your Lord if you are to be a true believer, if you are to actually enter through the narrow gate that leads into the kingdom of heaven. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." What must you do to be saved? You must confess with your mouth at the moment of conversion, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. In Acts 16:30, the Philippian jailer asks Paul, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" And in verse 31, Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

Today there's some people who want to make a dichotomy between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord. We've talked about this before, but I just need to continue to reinforce this. Some people think, "Well, I can have Jesus as Savior and He can wash away all my sins, but I can just now - I want to live and go my own way and do my own thing, and maybe ten years from now I'll surrender my life to Jesus when I get in a crisis or something."

No. You don't get Jesus in halves; it's all or nothing. And Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord cannot be separated. In fact, Paul said to the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus." "Jesus" means Jehovah saves. "Jesus" means Savior. God is Savior, and that's attached to "Lord." "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

So I need to ask you, "Have you ever believed in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead? And have you confessed with your mouth Jesus as Lord over your life?" It's absolutely necessary in order to be a Christian.

Well, look at the end of verse 13. She says, "and I do not know where they have laid Him." As you can see, she still has no idea that Jesus has been raised from the dead. She does not know who has taken the body of Jesus. She does not know where they have laid Him. She only knows one thing: "He's my Lord. He's my Lord." And the same is true for our lives. We don't have to know all of the how and the why and the where in our lives, you just need to know that Jesus is Lord over your life, because He knows how and where and what.

Well, this leads us now to verse 14, Mary discernment; and this really is where this account becomes very exciting. Mary now makes a discovery as she discerns that Jesus is alive. So look at verse 14: "When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there." Now she still does not know that this is Jesus who is standing there. And the fact that she turned around to see Jesus indicates that the angels are in front of her and Jesus has now appeared and come in from behind her, and she now turns around to see Jesus.

Now we don't know why she turned around. It could have been that the eye contact of the angels looking into her eyes suddenly now shift to the One who's standing behind Mary, which would cause her to turn around and look; the text doesn't tell us. Or it could be that when Jesus came walking into this tomb now, it may have been the two angels just fell to their knees and worshiped Him. That would cause you to turn around. We don't really know why they turned around. Or it could be that the angels pointed at Jesus standing behind her; the text does not tell us. But what we do know is that when Jesus walked into that tomb, she turned around and she saw Jesus.

And verse 14 continues, "and did not know it was Jesus." Now how could she not know it was Jesus? Well, she was prevented from recognizing Him as her Lord. Almost like a cloudy veil fell over her eyes, preventing her

from seeing Him for who He is. He's in His resurrected body, but the limitation is with her.

In verse 15, "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'" She's heard that question already. That indicates she's still weeping; she cannot stop weeping. This has ripped her heart out. "Why are you weeping?" And then He says, "Whom are you seeking?" This is one of those questions that we call a rhetorical question that's not intended to gather information, it's intended to make a statement, it's intended to make a point. And when Jesus says, "Whom are you seeking?" He is leading her to a conclusion.

So we read, "Supposing Him to be the gardener," that's how veiled her eyes were. She assumed she's speaking to the gardener, because Joseph's tomb is in a beautiful garden; and a gardener would be normally taking care of such a surrounding. So her only conclusion is, is as she's speaking to Jesus and He to her, she's talking to the maintenance man.

She said to Him, "Sir," which is a respectful address, "if you have carried Him away," - in other words, "If you have picked up His body and moved Him to another tomb, to another burial chamber - "if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, because I have to be where my Lord is. Tell me where you have laid Him, I will take Him away." This is commitment. Little Mary, "If you'll just tell me where He is," with her own two arms, she is going to pick up the dead body of Jesus and carry Him to the proper place, maybe carry Him back now to this same burial chamber so that she can apply the proper procedure to preserve His body from decaying.

And her attitude is very simply this: "Just tell me, and I'm committed for whatever it takes." Mary's life is like a blank check that she has signed and given to her Lord for Jesus to fill in whatever's required of her. "Just tell me where He is. I myself will move Him where He needs to be." And she still has a firm faith and a firm attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ even in the midst of the confusion of these last hours and these last days.

Now verse 16 is where it becomes very good: "Jesus said to her, 'Mary!'" That voice. "Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' And she turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni!'" She knew exactly who this was. As soon as Jesus addressed her by name, it's like the veil evaporated, the veil was lifted, and she saw Him for exactly who He is: her Savior, her Lord, King of kings, Lord of lords.

It speaks to how powerful is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same voice that one the Sea of Galilee that night said to the angry storm, "Be still! Peace!" and the whole Sea of Galilee was as still as a cup of water; that powerful voice that had said earlier in John 11, "Lazarus, come forth!" And Lazarus was summoned from heaven back into that dead body, and that dead body was raised from the dead, and he came walking out. What a powerful voice. It's the very same voice that said in Genesis 1:3, "Let there be light," and there was light.

This very same sovereign, powerful voice, "Mary!" He didn't just speak to her, He spoke into her. He spoke into her down into the depths of her soul, down into the very epicenter of her being, and He called her by name. He didn't say, "Whosoever." He called her by name.

You see, this is the mark of one who's genuinely converted to Christ. You have been called by name individually, personally. In fact, that's what the word "church" means; it just means *ecclesia*, the called out ones. We are those who've been called by name out of the world into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 1:9 says that, "We have been called into fellowship with Christ." First Peter 2:8-9 tell us that, "We have been called out of darkness and into light." And if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, I just must tell you that it is because the Lord called you by name.

You say, "I didn't hear an audible voice." No, you didn't; it was much louder than an audible voice. He spoke with such a powerful call, that He summoned you out of your life of sin, your life of indifference to Him, and He called you into fellowship with Him who created the world. "Mary!"

Verse 16 says, "She turned." Let's just stop right there. That means she had become so downcast as she is speaking to Jesus whom she perceives to be the gardener, that she's just hung her head and she's turned to a side in just disillusionment and in disappointment and discouragement. And so when He says, "Mary," she has to turn and look to Him. "She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!'" which is an intensified form of "Rabbi."

"Rabbi" means teacher, and John has put in at the end of this verse, "Rabboni means Teacher." And what this means is once again He is her Lord. To call Him "Teacher" means, "Everything that I know about God, about me, about grace, about salvation, about sin, about forgiveness, about redemption, about holiness, about purity and godliness, everything I know about heaven and hell, everything that I know, You're my Teacher, and You have taught me the truth, and my life has come under the authority of Your teaching." The word "disciple," *mathētēs*, means student. It means a student, it means a pupil, a learner. Well, every student must have a teacher, and every disciple must have a rabbi, a rabboni, a lord, a master, and that is Jesus.

Now before we move on to the last verses, let me ask you this question, "What are we to make of this that she cannot recognize that this is Jesus until He says, 'Mary'? How could she be in such a fog? How could He be so ambiguous to her and obscured to her?" I think we all ponder that question. And we do know this, that after the resurrection of Jesus, for reasons really we are not told, there were people who encountered Jesus who did not know it was Jesus.

For example, in Luke 24 we read of two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus suddenly joins them and walks with them. And Jesus begins to explain to them Himself in all the Scripture. And we read in Luke 24:16, "Their eye were prevented from recognizing Him." So it says God was closing their eyes, spiritually speaking, so that they could not recognize Jesus. And then we read in verse 31 of that same chapter, "Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him." And God would be the one that would open those eyes to recognize Jesus.

Now this is somewhat mysterious. But here's the application for us today and it's a very important point. You and I can only know Jesus to the extent that He chooses to make Himself known to us. The superior will be known only by the inferior to the extent that the greater chooses to make Himself known to the lesser.

I've known many great men, and I can only know them to the extent that they would allow themselves to be known by me. And many are very guarded about letting themselves be known by others. Well, carry this over into the spiritual realm. If you know Jesus Christ today as your Lord and Savior, it is a marvelous work of His grace that He has chosen to make Himself known to you, because before you were converted Jesus was obscured to you. You were living in a fog. Jesus meant no more to you than Christmas or Easter or a stained glass window. And it is not until that moment that Jesus chooses to remove the scales from your eyes and allow you to see Him for who He is.

In the epiphany of that moment you suddenly see what you could not previously see. In fact, you had eyes to see, but you could not see. You had ears to hear, but you could not hear. But in that moment of the new birth, in that moment of sovereign regeneration, Jesus invaded your life, and Jesus removed the scales and the clouds and called you by name, and in that moment you realized and recognized who He is and your great need for Him; and it wasn't because you were smarter than someone else in your family or smarter than some other friend you would have, it's because Jesus took the initiative and Jesus chose to make Himself known to you at the appointed time that He had chosen for you to know Him.

This is called sovereign grace. This is called divine intervention. This is called a divine appointment. And I wonder if you've had this kind of a divine appointment in your life where you no longer see just the profile of Jesus, but you actually see the person of Jesus.

Well, I have one last heading as we wrap this up; I say that to keep you with me. I want you to note in verses 17 and 18 Mary's desperation, because

Mary is not passive and Mary is not stoic, and Mary, now that she sees that this is Jesus, this does something to her. Can you imagine putting yourself in her position? So I want you to see how overcome Mary is. And I think you and I need to be overcome that we've come to know Jesus.

So, verse 17, "Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me.'" Why would He say that? Obviously she's clinging to Him, simple observation. And we know from Matthew's account in Matthew 28:9 that she took hold of His feet. So what this means, Mary is overwhelmed and overcome with emotion and excitement and exuberating that she literally just collapses and she just falls to her knees and falls to the ground. How could she remain standing? And she just puts her arms around the ankles of Jesus and is just clinging to Him as if she will not let Him go. She doesn't want anymore separation.

And so Jesus has to say, "Stop clinging to Me," because He can't just drag her around. I mean, He's got to go to the upper room. He's got to just suddenly appear in the upper room later this evening. He's got to walk through the walls and just appear. And we're going to look at this next Sunday on Easter Sunday. You're going to want to be here. You're going to be like Mary and be here. And everything that Jesus will have to say to the disciples in the upper room, in essence, "We're back in the ballgame. It's full speed ahead, men."

So, "Stop clinging to Me, I have more people to see," and He explains why: "You have to stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father." You see, in forty days Acts 1:3 tells us that Jesus will ascend from the Mount of Olives and be taken up into heaven, and two angels will come for Jesus and appear in the sky. And the disciples will just be staring up into the – just levitates, He just ascends back to the right hand of God the Father. And the two angels have to say to the disciples, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus who was taken from you shall return in like manner." He was taken visibly and bodily; He's coming back visibly and bodily, right?

And so, "Stop clinging to Me, I've got to go to the other disciples. I'm going to have to appear to them several times. I'm going to have to appear to as many as 500 people at one time," 1 Corinthians 15 tells us. "I've got to go to the Sea of Galilee. I've got to recommission Peter in front of the other disciples and say to Peter, 'Do you love Me? Then feed My sheep. Do you love Me? Tend My sheep.'" So there's still much ministry after the resurrection and before His ascension to return back to heaven. "You've got to let go of Me. Stop clinging to Me."

But what we admire about this precious woman is her love and her loyalty to Jesus Christ. Would to God I had a deeper commitment to Christ like this that I would lay hold of Him, and He would have to say to me, "Stop clinging to Me, I've got other people I need to tend to. For I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brethren," which is a reference to the disciples, "and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.' I need to explain that I'm returning to the Father and for you to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit that will be poured out on the Day of Pentecost."

And finally, verse 18, "Mary Magdalene came." This is written from John's perspective. So John is with the other disciples. So Mary, she didn't go, she came, she came to where John was, "announcing to the disciples," - can you imagine how excited Mary must have been to burst into that room? Now Peter and John had began to know, but notice this: "She announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord.'" She is willing to be considered - maybe someone, "What are you talking about, woman?" "No, I have seen the Lord."

And that's really what a witness does. A witness for Christ simply tells someone else what you've seen and heard. And if you know enough to be saved, you know enough to be a witness for Christ: you just tell what you've seen and heard. "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

So as we wrap up this scene there's been much here for us to learn today. And I want you to think about your commitment level to the Lord. I want

you to think about where you are in your relationship to the Lord, because as we live in this world and we're being pulled in so many different directions, and there are many lures and snares and competing attractions for our attention, I just want to ask you, "How committed to the Lord are you? Is Jesus the Lord of your life? If we followed you around tomorrow, would we clearly see that Jesus is the Lord of your life? Have you come to the place of the unconditional surrender of your life to Jesus? Have you signed your life over like a blank check and given it to Jesus, 'And Jesus, You fill in what Your will is for my life for the rest of my life'? I'm willing to go anywhere. I'm willing to do anything. I'm willing to pay any price. I'm willing to serve with anyone. Lord, it's no longer my way, it is Your way for my life."

I want to ask you, "Have you humbled yourself and submitted yourself under the lordship of Christ? Have you yielded your life to Him? Have you denied yourself and taken up a cross and followed Christ?" As you find yourself here today, it may well be that this message has been God seeking you out and to make known to you that, "Jesus has really never been my Lord." And if that is the case, that's good news and bad news. The good news is a right diagnosis is half the cure. You need to know where you stand with the Lord. And if you've come to the place where you realize, "No, I've been running my own life, I've been running my own show, I don't really check in with Jesus on how I'm supposed to live and what I'm supposed to do," well, then I would call upon you this moment in the privacy of your own heart.

I'm not going to ask you to stand up. I'm not going to ask you to walk forward. If you walk forward, I'd send you back to your seat, okay; so don't do that. I'm talking about you and Jesus in your heart; no one else knowing, no one else able to peer into your heart. Is Jesus the Lord over your life? And if He has never really been the Lord, I call you this moment to bow the knee. I call you this moment to deny yourself. I call you this moment to surrender unconditionally your life to Jesus. I call you to lay down your life, as it were, on the altar like a sacrifice, and place your life before the Lord Jesus Christ, and say, "Lord Jesus, I confess my sin. I need a Savior, and I need a Lord. Take control of my life." It would be the greatest decision you could ever make.

I'm going to say that again. It'd be the greatest decision you would ever make in your life; and you could do that right now, this moment, just between you and the Lord Jesus. He's been raised from the dead. He is alive forevermore. He is living. He is here by His Spirit. He is walking up and down the aisles of this church by His Spirit, and He just may be tapping you on the shoulder right now and saying, "You need to do what you just heard. You need to commit your life to Jesus Christ." May God give you the grace. May God open your eyes to see Jesus for who He truly is, and may you turn to Him and believe. Amen. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for the work of Your Spirit in our hearts and lives that You would make Your Son known to us, that we're no longer living in a fog, we're no longer living with a veil over our eyes and unable to see Jesus for who He truly is, that You have caused the light to shine into the darkness of our minds and hearts. You have said, "Let there be light," into our darkened hearts, and You have given us now the understanding of who Christ is and our great need for Him.

Would you work in every individual life and heart here today? We are in great need of Your mercy. We are in great need of Your grace. Make us more like Mary, sold out and surrendered, in Jesus' name. Amen.