

Scripture Reading:

John 20:1 – 18 “Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. 11 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, "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.' " "

Mary Meets Her
King in the Garden!

Today we celebrate Resurrection Sunday: A Sunday where God's people celebrate our Lord's conquest of sin and death!

Though well attended, it should not be primarily an evangelistic service, though certainly the Good News is presented.

This service should be a great time of encouragement for the people of God who know that their sins have been forgiven: Who know the Savior who came to save His people from their sins!

I will attempt to avoid the temptation of becoming too "theological" when preaching on the grandest and most important doctrines in all of the Bible!

We can marvel at what was accomplished in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, or how intimately all the persons of the Trinity are involved with the Father promising to NOT leave His Son's body to decay, Jesus with the power to lay down His life and the power to take it up again, or Peter's teaching that Jesus was raised in the Spirit!

However, what I want to pick up on this morning is a theme the Apostle Paul discussed in his instructions on marriage: There is a "mystery" in marriage with Paul saying: "This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church."

The Bible speaks often about the Church being the Bride of Christ: We celebrate the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day looking forward to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

The Old Testament pictures Israel as God's wife, who He loves and serves and who is so often SO unfaithful.

The Song of Solomon gives us a beautiful Old Testament picture of the Church as Christ's lovely bride!

Just as Paul shows the mystery of Christ and the Church in the midst of practical instruction for marriage, so Solomon uses the love of a man and woman to demonstrate God's love for His people, Christ's love for His Church! -- It must be BOTH, or we miss the richness of the Scriptures.

As John gives His resurrection account, we will see that it is rich with symbols that God's people should be familiar with from the Song of Solomon! John has Mary Magdalene at the center of His account. Mark tells us that Jesus appeared to Mary first, which has caused some confusion, but Mark is very clear and I trust we will learn the importance of John's focus on Mary: He is telling a Love Story!

With this in mind, let us carefully review the story John is telling:

We must begin in chapter 19 to properly set the stage, remembering that chapters & verses were added later: Helpful, but not rigid!

In this case if we just begin with chapter twenty we have missed important aspects of the setting:

John 19:38 “After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. 39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid...”

- **The scene is set: We have a garden & lots of spices: Keep this in mind as we hear about the grave clothes and the empty tomb. AND listen to what we find in the Song of Solomon chapter 6:**

“Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women?”

- **{We must remember this is a picture of the bride of Christ and His love for her!}**

“Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

2 My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the garden sand to gather lilies.”

- **Now in Chapter twenty, with this garden setting established, John puts Mary Magdalene at the center of his resurrection account:**

John 20:1 “Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

- **There were several women in the group that came that morning, but John singles out Mary Magdalene – A woman who had seven demons cast out of her!**
- **Just as there are many mothers in the genealogy of Jesus, but the Spirit specifically named Rahab the harlot and Ruth the idolater!**

2 “Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

- **Mary saw that the tomb had been opened and ran to get John & Peter! The other women saw and were spoken to by the Angels, then John gives the account of John & Peter which we read this morning**
- **Then John brings us back to Mary at the tomb, the one who Mark tells us would be the first to see Jesus!**

11 “But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.”

A picture of someone who has lost her love – Again it is a vivid reminder of the love story in Song of Solomon!

Song of Solomon 3:1 “On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. **2** I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. **3** The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. Have you seen him whom my soul loves?”

- **Yes, in John’s account we now come to some Angelic Watchman!**

John 20:11 “...as she wept [Mary] 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?”

Why indeed -- From a “human” standpoint, what more could she have needed:

-- Angels [*two witnesses – or watchmen*]

[Guarding the garden entrance]

[Guarding the mercy seat]

-- Grave clothes [two witnesses]

-- The tomb is EMPTY

-- Jesus had told them he would rise again!

Mary was NOT seeing with the eyes of faith!

John 20:13 “She said to [the angels], "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

- **Mary is sadly focused on the past... On the Lord she had loved and served: Seeking to love and serve Him still by tending to the body!**

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?”

Jesus asks WHOM not what are you seeking! He was pointing her to her living Lord and not some service or the past: She is clinging to the old creation and Jesus is about to make her a new creation!

We should take special note that the Christian walk is ALWAYS about WHO we are seeking and not what we are seeking or doing!

John 20:15 “She, supposing Him to be the gardener...

- **The Spirit reminds us again that she is in a garden setting!**
- **Man was lost in the garden when the woman was deceived and now man is restored in a garden when a woman meets her Risen Lord!**

“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.”

Mary continues to see things only through her eyes, but Jesus is about to give her NEW EYES to see!

John 20:16 “Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

Two simple words exchanged!

- **Mary’s eyes are opened and she sees her Lord, affectionately calling Him teacher, as she likely always had, but Jesus is going to show her a better way:**

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.' ”

Mary must now give up her wrong search – her clinging – and see that she NOW serves the Risen Savior – He was indeed her teacher, but now she must see Him as master, Lord: Her Lord, our Lord whose name is above every name! The child who was born in Bethlehem has now become the Risen Savior that Isaiah said would be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This was true for Mary and it is true for all who have faith in Jesus – All those in His church... His Bride!

18 “Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.”

Now, as with Peter, she is a changed woman! In fact, Mary Magdalene is now the FIRST evangelist going to tell the Good News that Jesus is Risen from the dead!

- **As we reflect on the glory and wonder of that first Easter morning, we must remember two important lessons:**

First, it is clearly a reminder that we must be patient in bearing with one another: We see in the actions, doubts and betrayals of Mary, John and Peter examples of why we must show patience and trust that the Holy Spirit will do His work in the lives of the Saints.

- ✓ **They had enough knowledge to “know”**
- ✓ **The morning’s events should have jarred belief!**
- ✓ **Even after they place their full faith and trust in Jesus we see doubts: We see them that very evening and even at the giving of the Great Commission!**

And most importantly we must learn the importance of hearing the voice of Jesus: We see Faith with Mary, then Peter, the two on the road to Damascus and finally with all the Disciples, including Thomas when they truly HEARD the voice of Jesus and their eyes are opened!

Jesus said to Thomas, "because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

We cannot touch the body of Jesus the way that Thomas did that evening, but we can hear the voice of Jesus quietly calling our name as He did Mary: His sheep hear His voice!

May God the Holy Spirit grant us ears to hear the voice of our Savior now and forevermore!

Communion meditation:

Food in the Song...

Song of Solomon 2:3,4 & 5:1

“As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. 4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

5:1 I am come into my garden, my sister, [my] bride: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”