

Apr 4, 2021 – Easter - I've Just Seen Jesus – John 20:1-18

Why are you here? It's Sunday morning, a good time to sleep in. It's a beautiful day. The fish are screaming to be caught. The golf courses are ready for you to tee off. The paper is waiting at your front door begging to be read. Why are you here?

Will you please tell me why you are here? **He Is Risen! He is risen indeed Alleluia.** What you said is enough to bring us back week after week until Jesus comes again.

The risen Christ is the solution to every single problem you are facing. The risen Christ is the only solution to our nation which is in rapid decline morally, spiritually, and politically in every way. Yes, the risen Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, the only One who makes life worth living and is the Door to eternal life. You are here because of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. Those who truly love Jesus can't stay away. There is nothing greater than knowing the love of Jesus. There is nothing greater than feeling the love of Jesus. There is no one greater than Jesus.

I have preached a lot of Easter sermons and some of you here have heard the majority of them. Thank you for returning. "Pastor, I have heard you say these things before." "Please say something new, something relevant, something that relates to the current topics of our day." "I already know the Easter story." To that I say, I have nothing new to say. Everything I am about to say has been said for the last 2000 years.

Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus, we are here because You are here. We are here to worship You and we thank You for being here with us. The message of the risen Christ is not new. May the Holy Spirit refresh us all through the Good News of Jesus' sinless life, death on the cross, resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven. May this Good News thrill us to the bone and bring us back week after week until the day of Jesus' return, the second coming. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

It was not even 6:00 in the morning. Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb, three days after his death, the death of her Lord Jesus, the Christ. It was the common practice in those days for Jews to visit the tomb of a loved one three days after one had been intombed (William Barclay, The Gospel of John vol 2, pg. 265). Jesus has been put in the tomb on Friday before the Sabbath began. He could not be visited on the Sabbath, Saturday, due to Sabbath laws, so Mary waited until early Sunday morning, the first day of the week. John only mentions Mary, but it is likely she was not alone as the other Gospels point out.

Mary Magdalene was a woman famous to many men. She was a lady of the night so to speak. Inside of her soul lived 7 demons. Jesus looked into the depths of her soul, had compassion for her, and kicked all seven demons out. Jesus forgave her all of her sins. Mary's love for Jesus was in direct proportion to the number of sins Jesus had forgiven. When you have been forgiven much, you love much. Jesus healed her soul, cleaned her out, and gave her a brand-new life, eternal life. The love that her heart ached for was filled with the love of Jesus.

It has been said that where our souls are least satisfied by Jesus, we turn to sin. Jesus gave to Mary everything she needed and what she needed the most was the work of God in her life. The life that our souls crave can only be met by Jesus. Only Jesus can satisfy the cravings of your soul and when we do not allow that to happen, we blame others, our jobs, our spouses, our friends, our finances, our health, our lot in life, and more. What your soul is craving, what your soul is crying out for is more of Jesus. Your soul was given to you by God. Your soul is shaped

to be filled with Jesus. Nothing else can fill it except when we spurn God and allow the evil one inside. Jesus delivered Mary Magdalene from the evil spirits, forgave her all of her sins and iniquities, and honored her above the women of her day by selecting her to be the first person to see the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus her Christ. The greatest of sights you and I will ever see is the risen Jesus. Mary Magdalene was the first one to see what we are all yearning to see, the risen Christ. There is no sinner too far gone for Jesus to save. Mary turned to Jesus and he gave to her everything she needed. Jesus satisfied her soul with his love and she loved Jesus in return. Judas rejected the love of Jesus and gave his soul to Satan. I would much rather be a forgiven sinner like Mary, than an unrepentant Judas. Whatever we wish to fill our souls with, other than Jesus, will be one's demise. Sin is so costly. Thank Jesus that He took all of our sins on Himself so we can be like Mary Magdalene and one day see the risen Savior and be with Him for eternity. One day we will meet her, and we will see the sincere love she still has for Jesus. When you have been forgiven much, you love much. Those who have been forgiven little love little.

When Mary Magdalene first came to the tomb she was horrified. The stone had been rolled away and there was no Jesus. It was common in those days for people to enter tombs and steal whatever was of value; sometimes bodies were taken for terrible purposes. Mary's pain was compounded. When things can't seem to get worse, they often do. Mary and whoever else was with her ran back to the leader of the disciples, Peter, and the disciple who was closest to Jesus, John, and told them that Jesus was missing.

Peter and John ran to the tomb, John winning the race. John peeked into the tomb but did not enter. He saw all the wrappings and they looked like a body was still in them but there was no body. Somehow the body of Jesus left those wrappings just as they were when they were around him. No tomb stealers would ever leave such valuable wrappings, especially still wrapped as if a body were in them. Jesus passed through those wrappings without disturbing them in his resurrection body.

The Bible says John saw and believed. John was the first human being to believe in the resurrected Christ, the same resurrected Christ that you and I believe in. John believed without seeing.

The disciples left and went home leaving Mary by herself if not with a few others who may have joined Mary. Mary is heartbroken. Her love for Jesus was unbreakable but her heart was breaking more than she had ever experienced. Sobbing, she looked and saw a figure of a man and thought him to be the gardener. The man approached her and spoke gently to her. He spoke as kindly and gently to her as he did his own mother earlier in the Gospel. Weeping, she asked the man if he had taken the body away. At that moment, the man spoke her name, and it was then she recognized her risen Lord and Savior.

It has been said that the sweetest words in any person's ears is the sound of your own name. When Jesus said, "Mary" she recognized the voice of her Shepherd. In the words of Jesus, "The sheep listen to His voice. "He calls his own sheep by name." "The sheep follow Him because they know his voice." "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:3b-11 interspersed).

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Mary Magdalene saw and felt the greatest love ever. She did not want to let go of Jesus. One of my favorite Christian contemporary songs sung by Sandi Patti and Larnelle Harris has these lyrics about Mary's experience. I respectfully ask you to listen as I read them. One year I would love this song sung on Easter.

We knew he was dead

It is finished, he said

We had watched as his life ebbed away

Then we all stood around

Till the guards took him down

Joseph begged for his body that day

It was late afternoon

When we got to the tomb

Wrapped his body and sealed up the grave

So I know how you feel

His death was so real

But please listen and hear what I say

I've just seen Jesus

I tell you he's alive

I've just seen Jesus

Our precious Lord alive

And I knew, he really saw me too

As if till now, I'd never lived

All that I'd done before

Won't matter anymore

I've just seen Jesus

And I'll never be the same again

It was his voice she first heard

Those kind gentle words

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Asking what was her reason for tears

And I sobbed in despair

My Lord is not there

He said, child! it is I, I am here!

I've just seen Jesus

I tell you he's alive

I've just seen Jesus

Our precious lord alive

And I knew, he really saw me too

As if till now, I'd never lived

All that I'd done before

Won't matter anymore

I've just seen Jesus

I've just seen Jesus

I've just seen Jesus

All that I'd done before

Won't matter anymore

I've just seen Jesus

And I'll never be the same again

I've just seen Jesus!

Please listen. Mary Magdalene recognized the voice of Jesus when He called her by name. There is coming a day when the Lord Jesus will separate those who know His voice from those who do not know his voice. Jesus is the Shepherd of the sheep, and the sheep know his voice. The goats do not know the voice of Jesus. Jesus knows not their names for they have rejected the Word of Jesus, the voice of Jesus. Jesus will say to the goats, "I know you not." Jesus will call his own sheep out by name. I close with this question. Do you recognize the voice of Jesus? Does Jesus know your name? Either you are a sheep, or you are a goat and there is no in between. Thank God for Mary Magdalene, the first Christian evangelist called by Jesus to tell everyone what she saw. Mary was never the same again. Amen and Amen.