

Easter Day – John 20:1-15 sermon Tregear 4.4.2021

Well this morning we continue to find out what did Mary Magdalene see all those years ago on that first Easter. I'm sorry that I couldn't get Mary back again today. It was a very emotional day for her sharing her story on Friday as you can imagine. But we left Mary at the tomb on that Friday night as she watched Jesus, his body wrapped in a long linen cloth, being placed into a newly made grave cut into the hillside. And she saw the stone rolled in front of the entrance.

Before we recount her story I want us to think: What is Mary's emotional state? Has she been able to sleep? For the last two nights I'm sure the scenes at the cross must have been playing in her head. Her beloved Lord, the one they followed for three years – dead. How could it have ended this way?

In the midst of her anguish though there is one job that still needs to be done. There wasn't time on Friday evening to prepare the body of Jesus properly. She needs to go back with the other women and finish this.

We pick up the story in v.1. Now keep this in mind. John just mentions Mary, but there were at least three other women with her when she goes to the tomb initially. These women are remarkable – they go to the tomb while it is still dark. This is dangerous for them, as women. We presume that they don't know anything about the guard or what happened in the very early hours of that Easter morning.

Matthew tells us that another earthquake had come, angels had appeared, and the guards that had been guarding the tomb had run off frightened.

Mary sees that the stone has been rolled back from the entrance to the tomb. Oh no! What's happened!! Someone's taken Jesus. So she goes running all the way back. Gets Peter and John and they run to the tomb.

John gets there first and looks in and sees the linen lying there. He hangs back at the entrance. Then Peter comes races straight in. Again, all he sees is the linen strips. Then John gets the courage to come inside the tomb. John makes an interesting statement here. John says that he saw and believed. Did you see there are three references to strips of linen and the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head? John is wanting to emphasize there is now no body. If someone had stolen the body they would have taken it with the linen wrapped around it. It's just like, as if, someone has just slipped out of the linen and left it there. As if they'd risen from the dead.

And then there's the comment in v.7 – our NIV translation says that the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head was still lying in its place, SEPARATE from the linen. Most translations say that the cloth was folded up in a place by itself. John sees this and knows instinctively that Jesus had risen. He doesn't know why he had to rise but he knows that he has come alive.

Meanwhile, Mary's outside crying. She came back with Peter and John and she's crying. Now as they leave she comes and looks in the tomb. As if her day hasn't had enough surprises there are two angels sitting there. How does she react? We don't know. But one thing is certain. They knew their covid rules because they are physically distanced as one sits where Jesus' head had been and the other at his feet.

Mary's no doubt gobsmacked and then the angels ask her the question, "Why are you crying?" And then Jesus asks her the same question. She definitely, even at this stage, having seen the linen lying there, doesn't think that Jesus has risen.

What a dumb question. Of course she's crying. Here she is at the gravesite of her best friend, the one that she'd seen die on the cross. People cry when they visit graves.

But do you get the question? It's actually an entirely appropriate question. Why are you crying when Jesus has risen just like he promised he would. There's no body here so you have no reason to cry. Someone said it's a bit like the Footy Grand Final. You're crying because you missed watching the game and your team was in the grand final. And this other person is saying, "Why are you crying, your team won!!"

Can you sense Mary's confusion and anguish here? There's no body, there's 2 strange men in white clothing, and now there's a gardener who's also come on the scene, or at least she presumes he's the gardener. Maybe he can shed some light on what's happening. v.15 – "Sir if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

And then she hears that amazing sound. Jesus calls her name, "Mary".

It's not, "Oh, that's right you were one of the ladies who followed me round, helping to provide meals." No, he knows her name. He knows our name.

John has recorded for us this meeting of Jesus with Mary. Why does Jesus choose to meet Mary? Why is she the first witness to the resurrection? If Jesus wanted to emphasize that he was risen why didn't he appear before Pilate or the Chief Priest. That would've shown them.

But this isn't the way Jesus does things is it? He doesn't even appear to a male disciple first. He appears to a woman, a faithful woman.

As we saw on the cross Jesus isn't concerned about reputations, or wealth or how good-looking you are. But he does want relationship with us – he longs to have relationship with us. This is why he died on the cross.

And as we finish our reading from John we notice the words of relationship in this last verse. Jesus calls the disciples "brothers". Two days ago they fled when he was captured, one of them denied knowing him; but who are they? "My brothers".

Mary knows for sure now; the disciples know for sure now, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the King. And yet he is their brother – they are a part of his family.

At Easter Jesus calls out to us; he comes to us like he did to Mary Magdalene.

He calls us by name – he knows your name. Come follow me; come into my family; come into my kingdom.

As we've read through Matthew's gospel, and we've only gone a short way, we've seen Jesus talk about the kingdom. "Repent for the kingdom of God is near"; "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Jesus' death and resurrection are the ushering in of the kingdom. Jesus doesn't come at the head of an army and set up his kingdom. Jesus' throne is the cross and he establishes his kingdom by giving of himself in love. The resurrection completes the actions of God to save us. His kingdom is now firmly established. Jesus has defeated the two great enemies – sin and death. He now reigns and he has brought in a kingdom that will

never end. His kingdom will be in the hearts of men and women. Now he reigns in the hearts of his people. Now we **CAN** live out the Sermon on the Mount – we can be poor in spirit, be meek, love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, because the Spirit lives in us, the kingdom is in us.

Mary's life was turned upside down that Easter morning. Jesus turns everything upside down. Death is defeated. He is the King.