

**Text: John 20:10-18**

**Title: “Risen ... This Changes Everything”**

**ILLUSTRATION – “Risen” video clip.** The film “Risen” is the story of a Roman military tribune named Clavius who is under orders from Pontius Pilate to find the body of Jesus after His tomb was found empty on the first Easter Sunday. If they can’t produce the body of Jesus then it will substantiate the claims of Jesus that He would rise from the dead. Clavius thinks that the disciples of Jesus took His body and hid it somewhere, so he sets out to track them down and question them. In the movie there’s a scene where Clavius interrogates Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. He wants to know where the disciples have hidden Jesus’ body. For someone like Clavius it’s simply unacceptable to think that a man who was confirmed to be dead and then to suddenly be fully alive is ridiculously impossible. Bartholomew agrees with him, and then he asks the question that stuns Clavius: “But what if it is true? That changes everything.”

The reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been changing lives for 2000 years. One of the first ones to experience this reality was a woman named Mary Magdalene. Her story is told in John 20. Open your Bibles to that passage. (There’s a Bible in the pew rack. We’re on page 1074). On the Friday of Easter Week Jesus had been crucified and buried. The Bible explains that He died for our sins so that through faith in Him we can be forgiven and receive eternal life. Now it’s Sunday and Mary had been to the tomb earlier in the morning with some of the other disciples who found the stone rolled away from the grave. They don’t know what to make of it, but it’s Mary who stays behind. She has to make sense of this for herself. **Read John 20:10-18.**

Now God is so good to give us this book, the Bible, to communicate the factual events surrounding the life, death and resurrection of Christ. And this morning God invites us into this story to experience the awesome power of the resurrection of Christ. You see, the resurrection of Christ changes everything, for a number of reasons. First, because the love and power of Christ gives us...

## **1. A NEW IDENTITY IN LIFE**

In v.11 we learn that after the other disciples left, Mary stayed there outside the grave of Jesus. She’s experienced double sorrow. She’s crushed that Jesus has apparently died, and now on top of that His body is nowhere to be found.

If you know a little about Mary you understand why she was so beside herself with grief. Mary is called Mary Magdalene because she was from a little village called Magdala on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Her first encounter with Jesus changed everything for her. In the Gospel of Mark it says:

**Mark 16:9 - When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.**

That's right. Jesus first found Mary a woman who was gripped by seven demonic influences. The Bible takes these "demons" to be real beings. We're not told specifically how the demons gripped her life, but we can imagine that in seven very real, torturous ways these evil influences ravaged her life ... emotionally, spiritually, and physically. And we can imagine the shame she must have felt as her life was completely out of control. Maybe there's a chapter in your life entitled "Shame." You look back on that time and you remember the embarrassment and the humiliation. You need to know that the shame doesn't have to have the last word in your life. The grace of God can overcome all that you would like to hide.

One thing is clear: Mary couldn't change herself. The evil influences were too powerful for her to control.

**ILLUSTRATION** – A few years ago at youth camp the kids talked me into riding on a mechanical bull. Have you ever tried that? The operator started off slow and I got the hang of it and thought, "This isn't that tough." Then he dialed up the speed and the spins came more quickly and the lunges were more abrupt and the next thing I knew I was staring up at the sky from flat on my back. That's the way sin is. It doesn't take us long to realize we can't tame this animal inside of us on our own. Mary didn't drive the evil influences out of her life; Jesus did. The power that changes everything in a person's life is the power that was unleashed when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

Mary had a messed-up past, but her identity was not found there. Her identity was not found in what others thought of her, or what she thought of herself. Not anymore. Her new identity was found in Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"**

So we're not surprised that Mary is now at the empty tomb of Jesus on Easter morning. This Jesus had changed everything for her, but little did she know that something happened in that tomb before she arrived that would change things even more dramatically. And this woman whose life was once so filled with shame and torment became the first person to see Jesus alive.

And what a tender moment this is. Mary is alone at the tomb of Jesus. John 20:11 says that she stood outside the tomb crying. We're talking overwhelming sorrow here. With her head buried in her hands her shoulders heaved with great, loud sobs. In spite of all that Jesus had already done for her in giving her a new identity, she didn't have the full picture. And that's the next way the resurrection of Christ changes everything. It gives us...

## **2. A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE**

Mary, so overwhelmed with sorrow, stooped down to look inside the grave of Jesus...

**John 20:12 - and (she) saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.**

And what happens from this point forward will completely reshape her faith and her understanding of life. Notice the two angels at the head and foot of the ledge where the body of Jesus once lay, and where now there are only Jesus' burial clothes. These angels are stationed there for a very important reason. They are there to help Mary understand that the reason the body of Jesus is missing is not because it was stolen or moved by someone else for whatever reason. The angels are there to show that God is all over this ... the hand of God has been at work raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus wasn't removed from the grave; He walked out of the grave alive. The angels are there to remind Mary (and us) that, yes, death had been at work there ... but more importantly God had been at work there, overcoming our greatest enemy ... death.

But Mary still hasn't put two and two together yet. She doesn't recognize that they are angels sent by God even when they ask:

**John 20:13 - "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."**

You see, Mary's despair comes because, as she says, "I don't know..." As far as she knows, Jesus is dead ... the end of the story. On top of that she doesn't know what has happened to His body. Listen...

**ONSCREEN POINT – Despair in life often happens because we don't know or believe the truth.**

**ILLUSTRATION** – I think about our Associate Pastor for Discipleship, Chad Brantley. Two months ago today I woke up early one morning to find a text Chad sent to me. Let me just read this to you from my phone. (Read text message.) I was literally sick to my stomach to think that my friend might be facing cancer. And I could only imagine what his wife Kim was going through. For the next couple of days there was so much despair as we imagined the worst. But then the biopsies revealed the truth ... the tumors were not cancer. Praise God. But do you see what was happening? We had so much despair because we didn't yet know the truth.

The same was true for Mary. The truth is Jesus was more alive than ever. The truth is sin and death didn't have the last word that day. The truth is that through what Christ did in His death and resurrection, people no longer have to fear death.

But Mary's still not there yet. She's still deep in despair because she doesn't know and believe the truth.

**John 20:14 - At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.**

It's early in the morning. Maybe there's not enough light yet for her to see who it was. Maybe her eyes were blurred by her tears keeping her from seeing Jesus clearly. Maybe she had already made up her mind that Jesus was dead, so she never entertained the thought this could be Jesus. Maybe she was just so overwhelmed with the sorrow and loss that she can't see what is true. Then Jesus speaks to her.

**John 20:15a - "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"**

The first recorded words of Jesus after He arose from the dead were, "Woman, why are you crying?" Isn't that amazing? Of all the things Jesus could have said after the greatest miracle of history. He could have said something profoundly theological, but instead He asks a compassionate, yet probing question for Mary to grapple with. Mary is overcome with despair because she doesn't know the truth.

Just think of how much we would be *spared of despair* if we knew the real truth. We would be *spared the despair of loneliness* if we really knew and believed the truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God. We would be *spared the despair of anxiety* if we knew and really believed that God has everything covered. We would be *spared the despair of crippling guilt* if we knew and really believed that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. We would be *spared the despair of devastating grief* if we knew and believed the truth that when God raised Jesus from the dead that changed everything. Our loved ones who have died in the Lord are safe.

And with a single word from Jesus Mary's eyes were opened. Instantly everything changed for her. Next, it opened up...

### **3. A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD**

Jesus called her by name...

**John 20:16 – "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).**

She's not just "woman" ... now she's "Mary." That's how personal it is with Jesus. He knows our name and calls us by name. And notice how Mary responds to Jesus personally. She cried out "Rabboni." The word means "master," "Lord" or "teacher." But there's a personal touch to it. Literally it is "my Master," "my Lord", "my Teacher." Jesus is not a dead hero. He's alive and because of that we can enjoy a relationship with Him.

There's more about this in the next verse.

**John 20:17 - Jesus said ... Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'** ”

Again, notice the new relationship Mary and the other followers of Jesus would enjoy with Him. They are now called “brothers.” And the same is true for all believers in Jesus. The Bible says our sins are forgiven and through Christ we are adopted into the family of God. Hebrews 2:11 says that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Now Jesus’s Father is our Father. Now Jesus’ God is our God. What a new relationship!

Now there was more that Jesus had to do, and there was more that Jesus had for Mary to do. There was no time for her to continue to cling to Jesus. You see, the resurrection not only meant a new relationship with the Lord but also...

#### **4. A NEW PURPOSE FOR LIVING**

**John 20:17 - Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”**

There was more for Jesus to do. The next act in the drama of our redemption was to take place in about forty days when Jesus would return to the Father in heaven (called the Ascension). Shortly after that the Holy Spirit of Jesus would come down to dwell in all believers. One of the reasons the Holy Spirit would be sent is to empower believers for their new purpose in living ... to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

But Mary’s new purpose would start that very first Easter morning. She was to go to the disciples to let them know of the resurrection. This is the audacious grace and mercy of God. Here is a woman whose life was so messed up and out-of-control. Now she will become the first one to see Jesus alive, the first one to touch Him and the first one to announce the resurrection.

**John 20:18 - Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.**

If you’re saved you have good news to announce to others. This is what it means to be a witness for Christ. We not only tell others the Good News of what Christ did on the Cross. It’s also personal for us. Mary said, “I have seen the Lord.” It was personal for her. And everyone who has been saved knows the Lord and has a relationship with Him worth telling others about. Our purpose in living is to glorify God in this way.

**2 Corinthians 5:15 - And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

**WHITE BOARD ILLUSTRATION** – The power of Jesus Christ is like a great eraser. When we put our trust in Him it changes everything. It turns SHAME into GRACE. It turns GUILT into FORGIVENESS. It turns HATE into LOVE. It turns FEAR into HOPE. It takes SIN and SELF from the center of our life and puts CHRIST there. Now it’s possible for you to have a

new identity as a child of God ... a new understanding of life through faith ... a new relationship with the Lord and a new purpose in living.