

The Good News!

John 20:1-18

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she 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 in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Have you heard the Good News? Jesus is alive! Have you heard the Good News? Jesus is risen from the dead! Have you heard the Good News? Jesus is risen indeed!

Oh, I am being rude; I have lost my manners and forgotten to introduce myself. I am *Mary Magdalene*, a follower of Jesus. I know you might find this hard to believe but let me tell you what I experienced. I went early on the first day of the week to Jesus' tomb. I had been planning for two days how the other women of our group and I would properly prepare Jesus' body. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus gave Jesus an honorable burial, according to Jewish custom, and they spared no expense. They brought for his embalming a vast quantity of spices that would befit a king (cf. 2 Chron. 16:14). Although they had done the best they could in a hurry, we would do it properly when the Sabbath was passed.

This morning I went to the tomb through the dark of the first day of the week. When I arrived I at the tomb I found the stone had been removed—"rolled back," rolled "away!" So, I ... ran ...I ran to Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and told them that Jesus' body had gone missing—what other explanation could there be? I had not yet looked into the tomb to see, but what else could it have been. Our religious leaders or the Roman soldiers or Roman authorities must have had their reasons! But how could they...how could they be so disrespectful of our Lord?

The disciples set off immediately, running. I ran behind them. From what I could see from my vantage point the beloved disciple outran Peter, and he looked into the tomb. Peter went passed him into the tomb! Then the beloved disciple went in as well, where he could see better. Both said the tomb was empty, just as I had said.

We had all been there on Friday, at the foot of the cross. We had seen Jesus suffer and die. We had seen them pierce him in the side and out had come blood and water, proof that he was dead. We had watched as Joseph and Nicodemus had loving, but hurriedly prepared his body for burial in Joseph own, new tomb. And now, disrespectfully, his body was missing!

Peter and the beloved disciple left me and returned back to their home. I was left alone. I remained, weeping. I could not help myself. I was overcome with grief. Then I bent down to look into the tomb for myself but, the tomb was no longer empty. "Where the body of Jesus had been lying" (v. 12)—where I saw Joseph and Nicodemus lay it on Friday—sat two angels!

The angels asked me why I was weeping. Because, I said, they have taken Jesus' body away, and I do not know where.

Then...I turned around and saw—where *nothing* was before—a man standing behind me. Oh! I thought the man—he must be the gardener—and he also asked me why I was weeping. I had been peering into an empty tomb. What did he think I was looking for? I did think his question was worth answering, I asked him to tell me where he had taken the body of Jesus so I could get him back.

Then the one I thought was the gardener called me by my name! Then I knew him. I spoke to him: "Teacher" (v. 16), and I reached out to take hold of him, before he could somehow get away again. I was afraid he might go missing again and I might not be able to find him.

He told me, not to hold on: he was going away, again. Tell my brothers, he said, that "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (v. 17).

When I heard Jesus' words—"my Father and your Father, my God and your God"—I recalled other words, from Jesus' last conversations with us. (See, for only two examples, 14:10 and 14:20.) In those conversations, Jesus promised that even as he went away, he would remain with his disciples in the Spirit (e.g., 14:16-17, 26; 15:26).

So, I let go of him. I went, as Jesus told me, to carry the news to the disciples, the good news! You may have seen the empty tomb, I told them, but "I have seen the Lord." And so, I have.

Richard S. Dietrich

The Easter message that Jesus is resurrected has a power made clear in the phrase, "ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Here we finally understand the opening words of John's Gospel, that "the Word became flesh" (1:14) that those who receive him and believe in his name will be given "power to become children of God" (1:12). The resurrection and ascension of Jesus extends the relationship of children of God for all who are united in him as sisters and brothers.

The resurrection claims that death has not ended the grand and noble project undertaken by Jesus—that the mercy and grace of God in Christ triumphs over all that would undo it. The resurrection of Jesus gives new life in God. It is not new life that lives only to die another day. Instead it is new life that abides in God, and thus abides forever. **D. Cameron Murchison**

Will we accept Mary's invitation to also come and *see*, and believe? Will you accept Mary's invitation to also come and

see, and believe? Have you heard the Good News? Jesus is alive!
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you heard the Good News? Jesus is risen indeed!

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