

Session 6

April 9, 2023

JESUS ROSE AGAIN TO GIVE ME LIFE

John 20:1-2, 11-18

While all Christ-followers are excited for Easter Sunday, none of our celebrations or pageantry comes close to the drama played out on that first resurrection morn. Each of the Gospels highlight various aspects of that morning, and quite frankly, they can be difficult to piece together. But taken individually or as a whole, certain elements remain constant throughout. Three key words come to mind in John's account.

Trepidation (vv. 1-2). Resurrection day began with a very busy morning! In some cases, the various ladies who show up at the tomb are mentioned by name and in others, only one or two of the best known are identified. Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2), became an ardent follower of Christ, and she is the most prominent woman associated with the resurrection narrative. While John focuses on her, we must assume that the other ladies were present at this earliest of visits (see Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1). While the body of Jesus had been prepared at His death (John 19:40), it was likely done in haste; thus, the ladies wished a more thorough (and perhaps more tender) anointing. They were aware that the tomb had been sealed, and how they would remove the stone was a topic of their conversation (Mark 16:3). But in that hazy morning light, they discovered the stone had already been rolled away (v.1). Imagine the questions that flooded their minds! Resurrection was obviously not their first thought; someone taking the body of Jesus away from them was! (v. 2). For reflection: *Read through the various Gospel accounts of that Sunday morning, taking note of the similarities and the differences. Why do you think no Gospel writer got all the details on paper?*

Identification (vv. 11-16). In the intervening verses (vv. 3-10), Peter and John raced to the tomb. John won the race but stopped short of entering (v. 5). Peter, on the other hand, busted on in. Both saw the grave clothes. Both saw the empty tomb. John "believed;" but probably more in Mary's testimony that His body was gone than in Christ's promise that He would rise again. After all, from there, they "went home again (v. 10)." The quiet narrative that follows is particularly tender. As Mary lingers in the garden, alone and in tears, she is drawn to the tomb and peeks inside. What the disciples had found empty, was now occupied! (v. 12). Whatever her initial reaction to the angels happened to be, her conversation with them is calm and clear. Her act of simple devotion had been interrupted and she can't grasp how or why. Sensing someone nearby, Mary turned and faced Jesus. There are plenty of logical reasons why Mary may not have recognized Him (v. 14). Perhaps there was lingering darkness in the garden at that hour. She certainly didn't expect to see the Lord. And too, she was upset and crying. It's interesting that the emphasis is on Mary's *crying*. First, the angels inquired about it (v. 13); then Jesus asked the exact same question (v. 15). I don't see this as some kind of rebuke; rather, I believe there is the subtle nudging that things have changed. What had been cause for such sorrow was now cause for great celebration! While Mary may not have recognized the *face* of Jesus, she certainly recognized His *voice* (v. 16). For reflection: *Some have suggested the term Rabboni (my master or my teacher) was very human and very formal. Others suggest it is just the opposite. What do you think Mary meant by the title?*

Commission (vv. 17-18). Like so many words in the Greek, the verb tense here is as important as the word meaning. “Do not continue clinging to Me,” is the best translation. Upon the recognition of the risen Savior, Mary fell to the feet of Jesus in an emotional and worshipful embrace. Jesus’ response was not a harsh “Don’t touch Me,” but rather a reminder that He would soon ascend to His Father. The earthly part of His redemptive work was done, but the work of His followers on earth was just beginning. Hence, Mary received the same commission the church would receive a few weeks later: “Go...and tell” (v. 17). For reflection: *Some suggest that there was something about Jesus’ glorified body that He didn’t want touched by human hands. But that is simply not the case. What other evidence do we have that Jesus was certainly “touchable?”*