

“WOMAN, WHY ARE YOU WEEPING?”
Revelation 21:1-8, Mark 5:21-43, John 20:1-18
Resurrection Sunday, April 20, 2025

In his book, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Zondervan, 1997), “Philip Yancey describes a unique funeral custom conducted by African Muslims. Close family and friends circle the casket and quietly gaze at the corpse. No singing. No flowers. No tears.

“A peppermint candy is passed to everyone. At a signal, each one puts the candy in his or her mouth. When the candy is gone, each participant is reminded that life for this person is over. They believe life simply dissolves. No eternal life. No hope.”¹

In a way, that’s what Mary and the other disciples were feeling at Jesus’ death on the cross. Their hearts were so devastated at the arrest, trial, crucifixion and death of their Master, they had no more hope left in them. They were so overwhelmed with all that had happened to Jesus so quickly the week before, their only resort was to hide out in a house, for fear that the Jews would come for them soon, and they would die just like Jesus did (John 20:19).

The women followers of Jesus were so grieved they gathered up spices and went to the tomb to finish the burial process. Their thought was that Jesus was gone. Death had come to Him at the hands of the Chief Priests and the Roman officials, and they thought Jesus was now gone forever. His life had dissolved; gone! No hope was left. The only thing to do was to finish up anointing Jesus’ body and get on with life without Him. They were all so overcome by grief they had forgotten all that Jesus had done and all that Jesus had taught.

You see, many times Jesus had done the miraculous by raising people from the dead. We read one of those accounts this morning in Mark 5 (21-43). But in all of those occasions, the followers of Jesus had attributed the resurrections to Jesus’ power as the Son of God. Yet when Jesus died, their thought was, “Now who can raise Jesus from the dead?” if they even thought it

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 62)

was possible to happen without Him. Death was final to them, and there was nothing to be done to have Jesus back. He was gone forever. They didn't remember that Jesus had told them three times what **had** to happen to Him, and then "*on the third day He would rise again*" (Matt. 17:23).

So when Mary and the other women went to the tomb early the day after Sabbath, they expected a stone on the door that they would have to move somehow. But much to their surprise, the stone was already moved, exposing an empty tomb. All they could think of was to run get the disciples and have them figure it out.

Well, that wiggled Mary out completely. Listen to how the Gospel writer John recorded the event. (READ John 20:1-18).

Now, we could easily judge Mary and the disciples for their lack of faith, but we would probably have responded the same way, had we been there. Peter and John could hardly believe that someone would have raided Jesus' tomb, so they ran back out to the cemetery just to confirm the women's story. And they found the tomb just as was described. John waited for Peter to get there before going into the tomb, but all they found were the linens that Jesus' body had been wrapped in, still perfuming the tomb with scents of aloe and spices. But they noticed that the head cloth that had been around Jesus' head was "*still lying in its place, separate from the linen*" (John 20:7). If someone would have stolen the body of Jesus, why leave all the linens and head cloth? So the two disciples left, completely confused about what had happened. They were so focused on the empty tomb that they totally missed the presence of the angels.

Mary, on the other hand, was so overwhelmed with grief, she could hardly see straight. Her tears blurred the presence of the two angels, one sitting at the head and one at the foot of where Jesus' body was. She was so concerned about where Jesus' body "had been taken," that her mind was not making the connections that something strange was going on. Even when the

angels asked her, “*Woman, why are you crying?*” (20:13), she totally missed the fact that God’s messengers were there to comfort her and to explain what was happening. The thought of resurrection never entered her mind. All she knew was that her Master was missing, and she wanted His body back. All she could manage in response was, “*They have taken my Lord away...and I don’t know where they have put Him*” (20:13).

She didn’t wait for other information from the angels. She left the tomb in search of the body of Jesus. She was so intent upon finishing the task of completing the burial process that she could think of nothing else. She wanted Jesus’ body back!

Now, the other Gospel writers record the surprised women hearing the angels’ report, and then, them going back to the disciples. But John has Mary so stunned at what she sees at the tomb that both her eyesight and her hearing are compromised to the point that she does not comprehend what is happening around her. Even when she encounters the risen Jesus, she thinks He’s “the gardener.”

Ever have that happen to you - being so consumed with one thing that you miss everything else going on around you? It’s a common human trait and we are all guilty of it at some point in our lives. Either by grief, or by absorption, or by being intent upon that solitary purpose, we miss the important things around us, sometimes at our peril. So it would be natural for Mary to have missed important clues as to what happened to Jesus’ body.

Moved by her grief, Jesus asked the same question that the angels did, “*Woman, why are you crying?*” and then added “*Who is it you are looking for?*” (20:15). So oblivious to what has really happened, Mary blubbers out, “*Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him.*” All she wanted was her Master’s body. Don’t confuse her with the facts of anything else. She wouldn’t be content, or leave, until she found Jesus.

Jesus didn't have to explain that He wasn't the gardener, but the Risen Christ. All He had to do was to say her name, and she recognized Him. "Mary" He said to her, and it was enough to snap her out of her confusion, her preoccupation with finding His body, and from her blurry eyesight. At the sound of His voice, everything became clear, and she cried out to Him, "*Rabboni! (which means Teacher)*" (20:16). The worries of the world were now lifted, she could breathe easily once more; Jesus was there. Everything would be alright.

What confidence Jesus gives to those who earnestly seek Him, call out to Him and then recognize Him in their lives. All of Mary's fears dissolved as she found herself in Jesus' presence. He hadn't dissolved; He was right there in front of her, risen from the dead just as He had said. Yes, He had died, but He stood before her at the mouth of the tomb, alive once more, full of the new life that only the Son of God can give. He is the very True Witness of Eternal Life! He is the giver of the hope that could never be taken away.

From that point on, there was nothing that could convince Mary that Jesus was dead and gone. No one could ever persuade her to believe anything else but that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and the Risen Savior of the world. The disciples would not be able to talk her out of what she had seen and heard. No chief priest or Pharisee could convince her that what she had seen was just a figment of her imagination in her grief-stricken state. She had seen Jesus, in person, alive and well, in flesh and blood, risen from His three night's sleep in death. What a precious moment it was!

Oh, but for us to have such an experience in our own lives that would forever cement our love for Jesus in us! You see, our world has done such a good job convincing many people that Jesus is dead, that He is dissolved, gone and cannot come back to help us. The world even goes so far as to say that His resurrection never happened, that it was a case of mass hysteria, all

imagining that they saw Jesus alive again in order to work through their grief and pain. The world desperately wants to persuade us that putting our faith in a dead Teacher is nothing more than ridiculous and foolish. The world goes even so far as to criticize and condemn anyone who might dare to believe that resurrection from the dead is possible.

And it doesn't always happen blatantly and in your face. Our society today gradually teaches that there is no such thing as resurrection, that we have to face the fact that death is final and that we'd just better get on with our own life so that we can make the most of it. So we're told to placate our sorrow and grief with alcohol, or drugs, or pleasures of every kind, and to give up the thought of any hope for our lives outside of ourselves here in this world. We are told that we are the ones who make life happen, so we need to abandon such foolishness as to think that Jesus makes any difference in our lives. According to the world, He's dead, He's gone, extinct, and best to be forgotten.

But that's not the desire of the Lord our God. Jesus rose from the dead to give us life, to give us hope, to give us peace beyond our understanding, and to give us faith that there is more than what this life has to offer. Jesus does not want us to remain trapped in grief, overwhelmed by sorrow, and dazed by death. He has risen to defeat death and to bring us beyond all our fears so that we might have faith in Him. He wants to give us the confidence we need that everlasting life is possible when we have faith in His conquering work on the cross and in His resurrection from the dead.

When we trust in Jesus' Resurrection, we have the assurance that we will also be resurrected with Him into the Father's house. Jesus had told His disciples, *"In My Father's house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will*

take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be” (John 14:2-3). So those of us who claim Him as our Savior and Lord, and follow His commands, and seek to do His will, do not need to be distracted by the things of the world, because we have our hope in being with Jesus. Death no longer has victory over us! We will live with Jesus! That’s the confidence we have with Christ. There is no more need to fear death!

“Donald Grey Barnhouse, whose first wife died, was driving his kids home from the funeral. One of the kids said, ‘Daddy, I don’t understand, where did Mommy go? I don’t understand what it means that she died.’ Barnhouse was trying to figure out how to explain death to his kids when, just then, a truck passed by and cast a shadow over the car.

“He looked back at the kids and said, ‘Kids, would you have rather been hit by the truck or hit by the shadow?’ Well, of course, they would have rather been hit by the shadow because the shadow doesn’t hurt. It just darkens things for a moment. Then in his own wisdom, Barnhouse said these words, ‘Kids, when you die without Christ, you are hit by the truck. When you die with Christ, you are only hit by the shadow. The shadow is all you get.’”²

Jesus’ resurrection gives us hope that He is not dissolved, but that we have the chance to be with Him when this life is over. There is life beyond this life here on the earth. The words of Psalm 23:4 come to fulfillment; “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.*”

But there is a requirement - we must have faith in Jesus in order to gain His peace and be assured that we will be with Him.

Here in our world, “when citizens travel overseas, they need a passport to enter into another country. The passport must be stamped, giving the person access to enter the country. No passport, no legal entrance.

² (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 72, #189)

“In order to enter heaven, a person must have a passport stamped with the blood of Christ Jesus. No passport, no entrance into heaven.”³ His blood wipes all our sins away, and His resurrection opens the gate to all who will believe in Him, receive Him, and follow Him.

There are so many in our world today to whom Jesus is asking, “Why are you crying?” They are seeking hope and life in all the wrong places here on the earth, and they have missed the resurrection of Jesus. They are so focused on living in this world that they become overburdened by the worries and concerns that are here. They become so focused on enjoying life and living as hard and as fast as they can with all that the world can provide that they do not give any consideration to the need to have Jesus first and foremost in them. Even as Jesus calls out their names to them, they are so consumed by the things of this world that they, too, many times miss hearing His voice and miss recognizing that He is calling for them to believe in Him. They miss finding Jesus standing right in front of them because they are so focused on getting all they can before they die. And many of us are in the same situation.

But on this Resurrection Day we have the chance to once more remember what Jesus did in fulfillment of His words, “*but after three days I will rise again.*” (Matt. 20:19).

Robert Lowry echoed these words in his song, *Up From the Grave He Arose*. Did you notice his lyrics? We just sang his song.

“Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior, waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!
Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Savior, vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!
Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior, He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o’er His foes, He arose a victor from
the dark domain, and He lives forever with His saints to reign! He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ Arose!” (Robert Lowry, 1874)

³ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 148, #447)

That's the assurance we have when we seek the Lord Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and when we listen to His voice and hear our names said to us. We are given the opportunity to get beyond the grief, to get beyond the hurt, to get beyond the tears that this life gives to us and find the joy of the Resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ. And when we find ourselves awakened from the foggiest of this world by the voice of our Lord Jesus, we are given the hope for victory over sin and death through His shed blood and broken body on the cross, and by His resurrection from the grave.

Jesus is not dead! He's alive! And He desires that we open up our hearts to hear His voice and recognize Him as our Master, and claim Him as our Risen Savior. Only then can we have the confidence that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. In the words of the apostle Paul, *"Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present or the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:35-39). Hallelujah! Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen, Indeed! Let's pray.

Father, Thank You so much for the gift of Your Son, Jesus! In His life, His death, and His resurrection, You have provided the way for us to have eternal life. Though each one of us must come to the moment when we hear Jesus call our names, help us to be able to listen to His voice and recognize Him as our Risen Savior, our Master, and Friend. Help us to pursue His will and His way throughout our lives, giving up all that the world may have to offer us, in order to focus on living for Him. Grant that we may know Jesus today, and once more commit our lives into His service, for we pray this in the Name of our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN