

Easter Sunday - Mary

Let's talk about Mary. There are lots of Marys in the Bible. Sometimes they are not referenced with a last name and it can be confusing as to which Mary the passage is referring. Two Marys stood at the foot of the cross on Good Friday. One was Mary of Magdala. The other was, Mary the mother of Jesus. Two different Marys. It was Mary of or from Magdala, Mary Magdalene who also stood at the opening to the tomb on that historic Sunday morning. (Slide #1)

Not Mary the mother of Jesus.

Not Mary of Jacob.

Not Mary of Clopas.

Not Mary of Bethany.

This Mary was from this little town of Magdala, a village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This Mary, was a disciple of Christ. Some say that her ministry rivaled even that of Peter, and that she was even closer to

Jesus than Peter was. This Mary, was posthumously elevated to sainthood because of her faith in and devotion to Christ. This Mary was never a prostitute. Apparently that was Mary of Bethany. It didn't help to end the confusion of Marys when in 1342 the Roman Catholic Church established its first **Magdalen House** for the rescue and care of 'fallen women'. 14 times the gospels refer to Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala. When named in connection with the other women who were part of Christ's ministry, Mary's name is always at the top of the list. Mary was utterly devoted to Christ.

It was not Mary Magdalene who poured out expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair. That was also Mary of Bethany.

It was still dark on that Sunday morning when Mary went to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been rolled away. If that were you, what would you be thinking? Mary jumped to conclusions. Immediately she raced off to where Peter and the other disciples were sleeping and

declared that the stone covering the front of the tomb had been rolled away and that His body had been stolen! Peter and the others (Slide #2) jumped to their feet and raced off to where the body had been laid. Peter entered into the tomb. John squatted down at the entrance of the tomb. He looked in, but did not enter. The tomb in fact was empty. The linens in which Christ had been wrapped were lying there, (Slide #3) the wrapping that had been on his head was rolled up and set off to the side. The men left, and returned to where they were staying, but Mary stayed. She wept. In the depths of her despair, Mary looked into the tomb.

She saw two angels in white, sitting where the body had been – one at the head, and one at the feet. The angels asked Mary why she was weeping.

As she turned away from the tomb she saw a man who, like the angels, asked her why she was weeping. (Slide #4) He asked her who she was looking for. Thinking he must be the gardener, Mary said to him, “Sir if

you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away". The gardener spoke her name, and in that moment, she recognized Him.

Jesus told Mary to go to the other disciples and let them know that He was about to ascend to His Father and theirs, to His God and theirs.

Mary raced off, found the disciples, and announced that she had seen the Lord.

Here are some things we need to know about the context of this passage.

1. It was the custom in Palestine to visit the tomb of a loved one for 3 days after the body had been laid to rest. It was believed that for 3 days, the spirit of the dead person hovered round the tomb; then it departed because the body had become unrecognisable through decay. Jesus friends could not come to the tomb on the Sabbath...that would have been breaking the law.

2. When Mary arrived at the tomb early that morning she was shocked. Tombs in those days were closed off by a stone at the entrance. A groove was made in the ground and a circular stone, like a cartwheel was rolled into position. Matthew tells us that the authorities had actually sealed Jesus tomb to ensure that no one would steal his body. Seeing that the opening of the tomb was uncovered, Mary was frightened and confused.
3. After all that had happened in the last few days, isn't it surprising to learn that Peter was still considered the leader of the disciples? At such a crucial time, Peter denied even knowing who Christ was, not once, but 3 times! There must have been something outstanding about Peter that would cause the others to still accept him as leader.
4. Peter, John, and Mary raced to the tomb. And when they got there, John looked in but did not enter. Mary waited with him. Peter being Peter went right into the tomb. The grave clothes were lying in place. They did not look as if they had been put on

or taken off but rather that Jesus' body had somehow evaporated from them. It was not what he had read in the scriptures that convinced John that Jesus had risen, it is what he saw with his own eyes!

5. Have you ever thought of this as a love story? Mary's love for Jesus was extraordinary. She was one of the last to leave the foot of the cross and she was the first one to the tomb in the darkness of the early morning. John was the disciple who loved Jesus and whom Jesus loved. John was the first to believe in the Resurrection....when he peeked into the empty tomb and saw the burial linens, he knew what had happened.....and he believed.
6. Mary was the first to see and recognize the Risen Christ. She could not see him through her tears. She could not see him through the dark clouds of despair that covered her heart. Can you relate to that? But when He spoke, she was able to hear. She knew in an instant that this was not in fact the gardener, but that

it was her Lord and Saviour. All he needed to say to her was one word.....Mary.

Overcome with sorrow comes, Mary was blinded to the glory, the blessings, and the miracle that was all around her. Can you relate?

The day of Resurrection. The day of New life, new beginnings, new opportunities!

Are you prepared to even consider that there are blessings all around you, waiting for you to discover? Are you willing to even imagine possibilities and potentials yet to be realized.....in your job, in your relationships, in your future?

Mary was so confused and frightened and overcome with sadness that she could not recognize who was right there with her.

It is not hard for us to lose perspective.....we go so deep into something.....our work, our self pity, our business, our desire to get our own way, the sound of our own voice.....and sometimes we just can't see what is right there the whole time.

For Mary, it was a way forward, it was Good News, it was celebration, it was gratitude, it was love. What might it be for you?

Blessings to you at Easter!

Amen