

Scripture: 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.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). 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.’” 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.

WHAT KIND OF JESUS DO YOU WANT?

If someone were to come into our church right now – someone we all know respect – and announce, “I’ve just seen Jesus,” what questions would you ask? What have you been smoking? What planet are you from? Or after the disbelief kind of died down you’ll then ask well, what did he look like?

That’s one of the driving issues a lot of people have about the resurrection; if Jesus, really did come out of that tomb – what’s he like? That was in the back of Peter’s mind when he hurried to the tomb that morning. Peter knew he’d blown it big-time by denying he even knew Jesus. Now, if Jesus really was alive again, Peter would have to face that.

John ran like the wind...faster than ever before...he got there first, but hesitated. Those thoughts of having promised Jesus, he would follow him always...what if Jesus really was alive; how could John face the failure of his own unbelief?

And Mary - Mary wondered if anything else could go wrong, now that the body was missing; even in death her son was disrespected. She couldn’t even have a peaceful memory of him now. Peter wanted a Jesus with a short memory; John needed a Jesus to forgive him; Mary just needed a body. And what about us – what kind of Jesus do we want? I was impressed recently with a list I read of the kind of Jesus people want:

- A Jesus who taught about love, but not a Lord who commands us to love our enemies.
- A Jesus who helped the unfortunate, but not a Lord who challenges us to sell what we own and give the money to the poor.
- A Jesus who paid visits to the silent temple, but not a Lord who desires us to praise like if the Wisconsin Badgers makes it to the Final Four.
- A Jesus who was a friend of tax collectors and sinners, but not a Lord who encourages us to embrace the sick, poor, oppressed, homebound, hungry, or lost.
- A Jesus who supported family values, but not a Lord who predicts that he will cause divisions in families, father against son and daughter against mother.
- A Jesus who accepted people as his disciples, but not a Lord who challenges us to walk the way of the cross, to lose our lives for his sake, and to find new life through sacrifice.

Again – when they got to the tomb Peter and John was confused. John hesitated and Peter rushed right in. Both went home shaking their heads; it wasn’t what they expected. Mary jumped to a wrong conclusion that the Romans or somebody was up to no good. But she hung around.

Incidentally, that’s a good thing if you’re struggling with how (or if) you want to follow Jesus – hang around. Mary did, and she was the one to first see the resurrected Lord. Hang around for more than Easter and Christmas – more than just when you have a special invitation. Hang around and receive a blessing that is meant only for you. Hang around for leadership opportunities and fellowship with the FAUMC believers. Hang around until the resurrected Lord talks to you; even if he looks like a gardener, an usher, a long lost friend, or a stranger in the grocery store.

What kind of Jesus do you want?

The most telling part (for me) of this whole event, at least from the standpoint of human reaction, is the fact that none of them, Peter, John or Mary, got it. Confusion, shame, misdirection – but not understanding; they did not “get” the resurrected Jesus.

Even after Jesus spoke to Mary and she recognized that it was Jesus, she couldn’t do the one thing she’d been heartbroken about – hugging him! Jesus told her, “Not now,” and sent her to spread the word.

If the ones who were closest to Jesus when he walked the streets of Palestine did not get the “kind of Jesus” they wanted, what makes us think we will? I have two responses to that interesting question:

You cannot have the Jesus you’ve constructed in your mind – that’s only an idol. God told us our minds cannot come up to God’s standard, “for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

You cannot have the Jesus you demand...that’s only an illusion. There are plenty of people who read an isolated verse in Scripture and decide – THAT’s the Jesus for me. What they do is set up a fence and demand that Jesus ONLY operate in their lives within those parameters.

For instance, you could read the verse in Malachi about tithing...bring all the tithes into the storehouse...see if I don’t bless you more than you can hold. Some folks take that to mean God will operate like a holy ATM; you put the tithe/offering in plate and presto – out comes a mega return. (When it doesn’t happen, they stop thinking of God as Jehovah Jireh – my Provider, I gave but Jesus left me holding the religious bag!).

The problem is illusory. We read something that fits our agenda and demand that God act that way.

In the 17th century there was a great fire in London. Along with St Paul’s Cathedral, more than 80 churches were destroyed, along with hundreds of buildings. Sir Christopher Wren was the architect who was responsible for restoring more than 50 of those churches and many other buildings.

One of the buildings was Windsor Guildhall, which still stands today. The arches of that building’s ground floor supported a spacious pavilion.

Some objected to Wren’s daring construction of such a pavilion as unsafe and demanded pillars to support ceiling surface. Bowing to pressure Wren had the columns installed.

It was not until years later anyone noticed that Wren had constructed the columns about 2” short of reaching the ceiling. If you look closely at the column tops, you will see they are lovely decorations supporting nothing!

Have you constructed your ideal Jesus? Have you demanded your kind of Jesus to have certain attributes? My sisters and brothers, you could think you’ve put in some lovely columns to support your way of thinking about the way God ought to behave or conduct the affairs of your life. In the end you will certainly find that those columns are just a little short of God’s glory; short of the plans God has for you long before you were woven in your Mother’s womb; short of God’s Promise to never leave you nor forsake you; Or you could find the only Son of God patiently and loving waiting for you - For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Amen. Amen. Amen.