

THE MAGNOLIA MESSENGER

Volume 3 Issue 16

April 11, 2021



Special points of interest:

- * "What Does Easter Mean to You?"
- * Crossword — *Spring*
- * Announcements — The Easter Season, Family Worship, and more!
- * "Why Knowing Christ is the Hardest Thing"
- * Liturgical Colors and Misc.



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What Does Easter Mean to You?

John 20:1-18 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

² She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb.

⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵ He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there,

⁷ while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

⁸ Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—

⁹ for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ Then they went home.

[Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene]

¹¹ Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in.

¹² She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.

¹³ "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴ She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him.

¹⁵ "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking

for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶ "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

¹⁷ "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

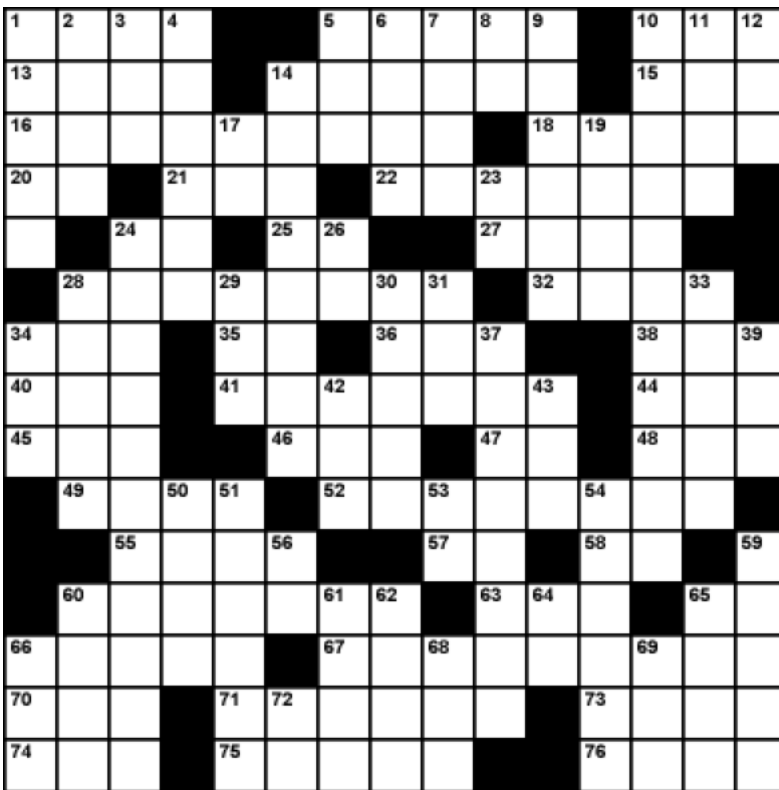
What are some of your Easter recollections from childhood?

My earliest recollections of Easter amount to little more than involuntarily trips to one of my relatives' homes for a grand feast of ham, mashed potatoes, corn, and dinner rolls. This customary meal was concluded with the ingestion of way too many cookies, pies, cakes, candy, and other treats.

At that time in my life, my thoughts about Easter were minimal. The highlight of Easter amounted to little more than eagerly looking forward to getting a large *Loft's* chocolate Easter Bunny surrounded by a squadron of those little yellow *Marshmallow Peeps* and massive amounts of other sugar-laden goodies filling a colorful basket to the brim. This blood sugar-raising delight was dotted with a rainbow assortment of jelly beans which would occasionally find their way to the basket's bottom through the fake green grass. I'm not complaining since it was always a pleasant surprise when I finally emptied out the basket to

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Spring — Crossword Puzzle



Across

1. * **SPRING** Sprouts
 5. Sleeveless garments
 10. What [John Lennon](#) had
 13. Sphere
 14. 4th letter of the [Hebrew](#) alphabet
 15. [Ms. Lupino](#)
 16. * **SPRING** Thing
 18. Proprietor
 20. He (Initials) starred in "From Here to Eternity" (1953)
 21. Forever, with the "ays" left out
 22. * Popular locale for **SPRING** Break
 24. Atomic #24
 25. State in the [U.S.A.](#)
 27. Heard on the Witness Stand: "___ time did I ever say I was near that crime scene!"
 28. * **SPRING** Sound
 32. Tailored

34. Completely
 35. Dai completer
 36. Three-toed sloths
 38. "Phooey!"
 40. The Lion
 41. * **SPRING** Splashers
 44. Poet's output
 45. Word heard in [Golf](#)
 46. "King" in [French](#)
 47. Mr. Cummings
 48. [Roman Numerals](#) for 19
 49. Have followers
 52. * Someone Seen in **SPRING**
 55. [Sir McCartney](#)
 57. Character on "Married... With Children" (TV)
 58. Atlantic Ocean inlet: Todos ___ Santos Bay
 60. * **SPRING** Scarer
 63. Self-governing, briefly
 65. Thusly

66. [Beatles](#) Convention comment: "I think it was just ___ that #55A was the Walrus, you know."

67. * In **SPRING**, they are worn during a #14D

70. [Mineo](#) of Movies

71. Canopy of Canvas

73. Something on a guitar

74. Sketch Show, smallily

75. Flux density unit

76. Soft cheese

Down

1. Disney movie
 2. [River](#) in Russia
 3. Cassidy's co-star, once
 4. Hunter's journey
 5. Crow Cry
 6. [Programming language](#)
 7. Another programming language
 8. Famous movie
 9. * Daring types might decide to wear them in early **SPRING**
 10. * Blossoms look lovely in them in **SPRING**
 11. Cartoon lightbulb
 12. Road substance
 14. * **SPRING** Soaker
 17. [Mr. Cool J](#)
 19. Bottled Beverage
 23. Loutish, without the "fish"
 24. * It works its magic in **SPRING** (See #1A for a Related Clue)
 26. Short greeting

28. * What people do in **SPRING**

29. Knock

30. Celebrated gymnast

31. Bellows the Actor

33. State of adversity

34. High spot

37. * **SPRING** Grower

39. Jinx

42. Barker

43. Look

50. Drawn tight

51. * Mothballs might be shaken from one in the **SPRING**

53. God of Egyptian Mythology

54. Fall asleep

56. Daring, without the "Bo"

59. [Rica](#) completer

60. [U.S. Treasury](#) law-enforcement agent

61. Sea Eagles, variantly

62. Vilify

64. Where Raleigh is, for short

65. Printer's direction

66. Beast of Burden

68. * **SPRING** comment: "Wouldn't this beautiful bouquet look nice ___ new vase?"

69. Square measure

72. I and I

April 2021 News and Announcements



Easter has come and gone, but the Easter Season will take us all the way until the day we celebrate Pentecost!

This is a time for God's people to celebrate the newness of life we have through faith in Christ Jesus. How do we do that when angry, privileged voices fill the airwaves and periodicals in a day and age? That's a good question! My rule of thumb, which is gradually becoming more a way of life than an aspirational goal, is to focus on the positive! Plain and simple! When we focus on the positive, we can leave the old harmful ways of living behind and look toward the newness of life that Christ Jesus has blessed us with salvation and sanctification. This Easter season can be a time of transformation in our lives if we would only yield ourselves to the move of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul writes, *"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."*

As a loving response to God's grace, mercy, and love, give yourself to God as a sacrifice. Let your mind and life be transformed into the very image of Christ Jesus so that you become the disciple you have been called to be to the world.



New Zoom Class — *The Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith* is a visual introduction to the Christian faith's core beliefs. While it assumes no background knowledge of the scriptures or church teachings, this eight-week study is stocked with rich explanations and engaging videos that bring catechesis to life for people of all ages, backgrounds, and stops along their spiritual journey. Like all books, it is possible to read this one alone, but it is designed specifically to be studied in community—to lead small and large groups through the big ideas of the faith. The memory verses, catechism, text, and videos in each lesson work together seamlessly to provide a clear, compelling introduction to Christian belief.

In working through this study, you'll be binding the truth about God on your head, hands, and house through scripture memorization and by learning the answers to important questions about God. Obeying Jesus takes a lifetime of learning. As you enter this study, let God's grace shape and change you. This is what it means to be a disciple.

Blessings,

Pastor Gary

Crossword Puzzle Solution - "Spring"

1	B	U	3	D	4	S				5	C	A	P	E	S			10	W	I	12	T
13	A	R	E	A				14	D	A	L	E	T	H				15	I	D	A	
16	M	A	Y	F		17	L	O	W	E	R			18	O	W	N	E	R			
20	B	L			21	A	L	W			22	F	L	23	O	R	I	D	A			
	I		24	C	R			25	N	H			27	A	T	N	O					
		28	C	H	I	29	R	P	I	30	N	G		32	S	E	W	33	N			
34	A	L	L			35	A	O		36	A	I	S				38	B	A	39	H	
40	L	E	O			41	P	U	42	D	D	L	E	43	S			44	O	D	E	
45	P	A	R					46	R	O	I			47	E	E		48	X	I	X	
		49	N	O	T	50	S			52	G	A	R	D	E	N	E	R				
			55	P	A	U	56	L			57	A	L		58	O	S			59	C	
		60	T	H	U	N	D	E	R		61	I	N	D		65	S	O				
66	A	M	Y	T	H			67	R	A	I	N	C	O	69	A	T	S				
70	S	A	L			71	A	W	N	I	N	G			73	F	R	E	T			
74	S	N	L			75	T	E	S	L	A				76	F	E	T	A			

What Does Easter Mean to You?

discover that stray jelly bean that had evaded my superficial efforts at finding the last bit of candy!

Perhaps some folks might still be at a loss as to what Easter is all about! They, like I was a youth, considered this day to be filled with unwanted and involuntary trips to the houses of relatives, friends, and other destinations like church. Perhaps even your presence here this morning has been without your 100% approval rating! I understand, but be patient with me as I describe a voluntary journey or two!

Throughout the Lenten Season, we, as a church, have corporately been taking a voluntary journey of self-denial so we could draw closer to Jesus and to better understand His death, burial, and resurrection. This past week, our journey was drawing to an end with our Maundy Thursday and Tenebrae services. As the week closed, we heard the moving Passion narrative once again.

The Passion narrative describes the intensity with which Jesus voluntarily suffered for us all at the hands of sinful men as He paid the ultimate price to redeem fallen mankind!

During His last recorded time with His disciples, Jesus gave them a new commandment to love one another just as He has loved them! He then went on to tell them that He would voluntarily give His life as a sacrifice. He also told them his sacrifice would be followed by a period of great sadness and mourning...but He added that this time of sorrow would be followed by great joy! Though they did not fully understand all of His words at that time, they knew something intense was about to happen!

In **John 16:20-22**, we read, *I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy.* ²¹ *It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world.* ²² *So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.*

And they most certainly felt great sorrow and grief! But they were not alone in their despair. In those final hours on the cross, even the sky itself was darkened before Jesus uttered those oft-repeated words, *"It is finished!"* The price for sin had been paid in full!

- Following Jesus' death, the darkness of the sky had vanished, but a different kind of darkness came over the disciples...the darkness of despair that comes from hopes that have been dashed to pieces. The hopes that they placed in Jesus as the Messiah. The hopes of God's sense of justice that such a righteous man could be allowed to be struck down.
- The darkness of despair hung over the disciples as Jesus' body was claimed from Pilate by Joseph of Arimathaea.
- The darkness of despair hung over the disciples as Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus took Jesus' body to the Garden tomb and hastily prepared His body for burial because the Sabbath was rapidly approaching.
- The darkness of despair hung over the disciples as they rested on the weekly Sabbath day of Saturday as the Law commanded.
- The darkness of despair hung over the disciples as the women were readying some ointments and spices to continue the hasty burial process that Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus had begun.

This was the bleakness of their weekend from the ninth hour when Jesus cried out, *"It is finished!"* until Sunday morning. In our passage for this morning (**John 20:1-18**), their sorrow was about to slowly turn into great joy!

What Does Easter Mean to You?

Let's step back in time to that first Easter morning and hear it with a few explanations...

It was the first day of the week, that is., Sunday morning, and we see Mary Magdalene arriving on the scene to visit the tomb of Jesus. As much as Jesus' disciples, the twelve and the others, loved Jesus, Mary Magdalene had a place of love in her heart for Jesus that was very special. Although church tradition tells us that she was the woman who was forgiven of great sinfulness and immorality, the Scriptures do not paint such a negative picture of her. Scripture tells us that she was healed of many ailments, demonic oppression, loved by Jesus and given a mission, new purpose, and everlasting life through Him. How appropriate it is that John singles Mary Magdalene out in her early morning visit to the tomb of Jesus.

Why the rush to get there? First things first, she loved Jesus and wanted to visit His tomb as many of us visit the places of rest of our loved ones. Secondly, it was the custom in those days to visit the tomb of a loved one where the body had been laid to rest, particularly within the first 3-days after death. This was because it was believed that the soul lingered around the tomb for that time and then departed forever after that time frame.

With travel restrictions as part of the Law, none of Jesus' disciples could visit the tomb much sooner than Mary did. They all had to wait until the weekly Sabbath was over. At the earliest possible moment, after the Sabbath restrictions were over, Mary Magdalene went to visit the tomb of Jesus as her last act of love.

It was still dark when she arrived sometime during the last watch of the night. I can only imagine the flood of emotions going through Mary as she trekked through the early morning darkness that day.

Fear, sadness, and singleness of purpose were her only companions. But with the presence of the open tomb, the possible fear of grave robbers still lingering nearby, and a broken heart, she quickly departed to tell the other disciples of what she had witnessed. She told Peter and another disciple, *"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."* (Although Mary Magdalene is the only woman mentioned by John, we know that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and others accompanied her as well!)

Quickly the two disciples left, with John arriving first. Although first on the scene, John only peers into the empty tomb and sees the grave clothes. As we might expect, impetuous Peter then entered the tomb and not only saw the grave clothes but noticed that the head covering was set apart from the other linens. Questions must have started to buzz around in their heads; perhaps one question may have been: *"If Jesus' tomb had been the target of grave robbers, then why would they leave the grave clothes?"* As they pondered this thought further, another equally intriguing observation must have come to them. So, what was it then? Since the linens were so orderly and neatly in place, this could not have been a grave robbery. To them, it must have seemed as if the body of Jesus had just evaporated out of His grave clothes and into thin air.

Ponder this as they may, precisely what had transpired was beyond the comprehension of these two disciples, but whatever happened to Jesus, this scene coupled with Jesus' teachings made John into a believer. It would take an encounter with the risen Christ later that same day to bring him to that same place of belief for Peter.

Peter and the other disciple departed the area, but Mary Magdalene remained outside the tomb. She was tearful but bravely decided to take a peek into the tomb, but what she saw must have been at least a little bit shocking; therein she saw two angels; one at the foot and one at the head of where Jesus had been laid to rest. *[Having been inside of what was at the very least a first-century tomb in Jerusalem, I can tell you that there is enough room for about 4 average-sized people to comfortably enter into such a tomb.]*

They asked her an interesting question; it was a question that she would hear in an expanded version very shortly, *"Woman, why are you weeping?"* She said to them, *"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."*

The more probing version of the question was quickly asked by another yet unknown person coming from behind

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Why Knowing Christ Is the Hardest Thing

By **J.D. Walt** — April 5, 2021

No truer, more poignant, or more aspirationally ambitious words have ever been spoken than these from the tenth and eleventh verses of the third chapter of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (NIV 1984).

This is our first love. To this we must return again and again and again. The whole genome of the Christian faith lives in these powerful words.

I want to know Christ. Let those words settle over you.
I want to know Christ. Let them lodge in your deepest heart.
I want to know Christ. This is our first love.

This is what it means to follow Jesus, to be a Christian. No matter how far along you are on the journey, no matter if you serve in the church vocationally or professionally—in fact, especially if you serve in the church vocationally or professionally—you never progress beyond this core aspiration: I want to know Christ. In a wedding ceremony, the first act of worship is the declaration of intent by the bride and the groom. The parties are asked questions something like this these:

Do you take this man/woman to be your lawfully wedded spouse? Will you love him/her, comfort him/her, honor and keep him/her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep only to him/her so long as you both shall live? This is the kind of intent Jesus looks for in his followers.

I want to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

It can take time to get there, and be even more challenging to stay there, but this is the invitation. So why would we make such a declaration? Only one reason—Jesus has already made this kind of declaration toward us.

I want to know Christ.

If you are anything like me, though, I don't tend to linger too long there. I am eager to get to the next part of the declaration.

I want to know the power of his resurrection.

If I'm honest, that's what I'm most interested in. I want to know the resurrection power. I want to do the stuff Jesus did. I want to do great things in his name. I want to know the power of his resurrection. But can we just pause and back up a step? We need to do more than linger with those first words. We must make camp there, and not just a temporary retreat kind of camp but a permanent camp. This is our home. First love. I want to know Christ. Full stop.

Why is this so important? For starters, because if we ever get past it, we've lost it. There is no resurrection power outside of knowing Jesus. It is the fruit of the fellowship. And speaking of fellowship, watch where the text goes.

I want to know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

Keeping it real here, I am not entirely sure I want to know this—the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings. You too? That's okay. This is a marathon we are running here, not a hundred-yard dash. Let's back up a couple of steps.

I want to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection . . .

Why Knowing Christ Is the Hardest Thing

So what if the point of the power of his resurrection is to enable us to participate in the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings? And what if within the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings is where the power of his resurrection becomes the most real and the most powerful? And what if this is where we really get to know Jesus? It gets deeper still.

. . . becoming like him in his death.

Okay, that's a bridge too far. But isn't this the very song Paul sings out in the second chapter of this letter—about having the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, who took on the nature of a slave, humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even death on a cross? Yes, Paul actually wants us to sing along with our lives.

This is moving past a declaration of intent and into something akin to vows. “For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.” Only this is not till death do us part. Keep tracking.

I want to somehow attain to the resurrection of the dead.

While death is the end of a marriage, it looks to be the beginning of the life hid with Christ in God. The resurrection of the dead was a given for Paul. He said as much in his letter to the Corinthians. If the dead are not raised, then Christ was not raised. Permit me to ponder with you here. The resurrection of the dead was as fixed as the sun in Paul's understanding. He wasn't striving to attain that which was a given at the end of time. Paul believed there was an ever-increasing sense that though he would be raised on the last day, this future reality was available even now—in life—before death. Because Jesus had attained to the resurrection of the dead, in this life, Paul believed it was somehow possible for him—and us—to attain it now. It's why he wrote things in this letter like, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

It gets richer. Here's the even deeper mystery. Paul has accelerated his own death, allowing it to become subsumed in the death of Jesus, and thereby abandoning his whole life to him. Consider how he put it in Galatians, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:20).

And did I mention Paul wrote this letter from his retreat home overlooking the Mediterranean Ocean? No! Paul wrote this from a dank, dark prison cell. From a hopeless, joyless, and loveless place, Paul wrote what has become known as the Epistle of Joy. The one in greatest apparent need of encouragement became the greatest encourager of all time. What was his secret? For Paul there was only ever this: I want to know Christ.

*To know Jesus is to know everything else.
The power of his resurrection.
The fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.
The becoming like him in his death.
The somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

It seems right and good to close out this introduction with perhaps Paul's greatest benediction, coming on the heels of the powerful declaration of his intention.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12–14)

I want to know Christ. First love.

Source: <https://www.seedbed.com/why-knowing-christ-is-the-hardest-thing/>

THE MAGNOLIA
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

FAMILY WORSHIP 9:00 A.M.
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:35 A.M.
GENESIS SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:35 A.M.
SANCTUARY WORSHIP 10:45 A.M.

Mailing Address:

Magnolia First United Methodist Church
320 West Main Street
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

Phone: 870-234-4530 (Church)

Pastor: The Reverend Dr. Gary L. Maskell

Email: homiletics2002@gmail.com

Webpage: <http://www.magnoliafumc.org/home>

Lectionary Texts for this Week
April 11, 2021

Resurrection Sunday!

Lectionary Texts:

Acts 4:32-35,
Psalm 133 (UMH 850),
1 John 1:1-2:2,
John 20:19-31

Liturgical Color: White or Gold

White symbolizes purity, holiness, and virtue, as well as respect and reverence. White is used for all high Holy Days and festival days of **the Church Year**, especially the seasons of **Christmas** and **Easter**, as well as for baptism, marriage, dedications, and in some traditions for the ordination of ministers. In some church traditions it is also used for funerals as a symbol of the resurrection.

What Does Easter Mean to You?

her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Since they were in a garden, Mary logically thought that the voice belonged to the gardener and so she said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Here is where the beauty of the passage comes to light and to life! With one simple word, i.e., her name, she was brought from tears of sorrow to a place of joy! ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus [then] said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" Not only did Jesus differentiate between His relationship with the Father and that of His followers, but in this brief command, Jesus essentially commissioned Mary Magdalene as the first apostle and evangelist to announce the Good News that He had risen from the dead! As we read in the next verse, this was a command that she immediately followed with loving faithfulness!

The resurrection account tells us about a miraculous event that took place some 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem, but what does it mean for you and me? Is it a miracle without a purpose? Or is it something far more significant and further reaching than that? Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" **John 15:13** In **John 14:19** Jesus also said, "because I live, ye shall live also."

What does Easter mean to you? or better yet, **what should it mean to you?** It's much more than Easter Bunnies and candies, I can assure you of that! It means that Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of this world that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That word *whosoever* means precisely what it says...anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior shall be saved. Salvation does not come through a denomination or creed or ritual, but by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation!

While there is the breath of life in your body, it is never too late to accept Him as your Lord and Savior. Even after the Disciples abandoned Him, there was room for forgiveness and so there is forgiveness for you too! The choice is yours, but I urge you...don't let another moment go by without Jesus as your Savior...confess your sins to Him, ask forgiveness, and you will have eternal life by grace through faith in Him!

Remember that you have been blessed to be a blessing. So be one!

Pastor Gary