



grow. pray. study.

September 28, *The Resurrection and the Life*

Jesus sent Mary first (yes, a woman) to share the news

MONDAY 9.29.25 John 20:11-18

As nearly as we can tell, the first person to see Jesus after he rose from the dead was his devoted disciple Mary of Magdala. At first, Mary thought Jesus was “the gardener.” In John’s symbolism, he was—Adam and Eve failed in the original garden (cf. [Genesis 2:8, 15](#)), but Jesus would restore earth’s “garden” (cf. [John 19:41, Romans 5:15-21](#)). When Jesus called Mary by name, she had a deep, immediate sense of recognition. She no longer had to mourn her beloved Lord. He was alive!

- Mary thought she was going to the tomb to finish preparing Jesus’ body for burial. Why not weep? Grieving a loss is healthy, not bad. Yet two angels (“in white,” not the color of sorrow) and a man she couldn’t identify all asked her, “Why are you crying?” Has God ever helped you see more to a painful or negative experience than just reason to grieve? What are you facing now that needs the touch of God’s life and hope?
- When Jesus spoke her name, Mary rapidly moved from utter despair to unbelievable joy. How can you more and more come to know the “sound” of Jesus’ loving, caring voice “whispering” in your mind? What steps may help you make and keep your relationship with Jesus personal, linking your heart and his, rather than merely an academic exercise?

Prayer: Living Lord, help me never to fear tears and sorrow—and never to get stuck in them, either. Give me eyes to see people, situations and myself in the light of your eternal love. Amen.

Recognizing a wise stranger in a flash

TUESDAY 9.30.25 Luke 24:13-32

Jesus walked, unrecognized, with two of his disciples. The crucifixion crushed their hopes (“we had hoped”—verse 21) and it stunned them that “some women” said Jesus’ body was missing. (They didn’t say they believed it—it just puzzled them.) Jesus interpreted for his sad followers “the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets” (verse 27). As he broke and blessed bread, they knew him with sudden memory, insight and joy.

- Scholar N. T. Wright noted, “It wasn’t simply...that they couldn’t recognize him. This is a strange feature of the resurrection stories, in Matthew ([28:17](#)) and John ([20:14](#); [21:4](#), [12](#)) as well as hereJesus’ body, emerging from the tomb, had been transformed. It was the same, yet different—a mystery we shall perhaps never unravel until we share the same risen life.” * Do you long to share the gift of that risen life, even the aspects that for now remain puzzling to us?
- Scholar William Barclay said this story “tells us of the ability of Jesus to make sense of things.... Jesus came and talked with them, and the meaning of life became clear and the darkness became light.... It is only in Jesus that, even in the bewildering times, we learn what life means.” ** Can you recall any moments when something painful and puzzling suddenly made more sense in the light of Jesus’ love and grace?

Prayer: Loving Lord, when I feel discouraged, disillusioned, or disbelieving, please come and join me on life’s road. It is particularly at those times that I need your living, loving presence with me. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Luke for Everyone* (New Testament for Everyone) (p. 295). SPCK. Kindle Edition.

** William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 295.

Rooting their faith in experience and the Scriptures

WEDNESDAY 10.1.25 Luke 24:36-45

After realizing Jesus was alive, the two disciples rushed to Jerusalem to tell the news. As they spoke, Jesus “stood among them.” Luke, a first-century physician (cf. [Colossians 4:14](#)), noted details that showed Jesus was alive in the flesh. “24:43 *he took it and ate it*. Many Jewish sources doubted that angels [or ghosts] ate human food.” * As at Emmaus, Jesus rooted their faith firmly in Scriptures they’d struggled to understand when he’d shared them (cf. [Luke 18:31](#), [22:37](#)), not just in seeing him.

- Pastor Bruce Larson noted that Luke was “familiar with the Greek philosophy that the body and its appetites were evil. The soul and mind were good. The Greeks believed that in death the mind and spirit were freed from their bondage to the body.... Luke, despite his Greek background, underscored the Hebrew theology... of the unity of body, mind, and soul.” * Later the Apostles’ Creed said, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” Do you believe in that, and count on it?
- “There are two ways to look at human history. One way is to focus on the wars and violence, the squalor, the pain and tragedy and death.... If I take Easter as the starting point, the one incontrovertible fact about how God treats those whom he loves, then human history becomes the contradiction and Easter a preview of ultimate reality. Hope then flows like lava beneath the crust of daily life.” *** Do you choose violence, squalor and pain as ultimately real, or the hope flowing from Jesus’ resurrection?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you went where most of us most dread going—the realm of death—and came forth victorious! Help me claim your victory, and live and die in calm trust in your eternal love and life. Amen.

* Zondervan, NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 234651-234653).

** Bruce Larson, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 26: Luke*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc. 1983, pp. 354-355.

*** Phillip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Publishing Company, 1995, pp. 219-220.

The breath of life for the disciples, even Thomas

THURSDAY 10.2.25 John 20:19-29

Jesus' disciples hid, afraid of the Jewish rulers. Jesus died; now his body was missing. But no one had stolen that body. Jesus was alive, their Messiah more than ever. He gave them his peace, his purpose ("As the Father sent me, so I am sending you"), and his power ("Receive the Holy Spirit"). Thomas missed the first meeting. He wouldn't take their word that Jesus was alive. Jesus was patient with Thomas. Meeting Jesus clearly alive eight days later ended Thomas' doubt. He said, "My Lord and my God!"

- John's gospel pointed readers to the Genesis 1-3 creation stories. After Jesus gave the disciples their mission (verse 21), "he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'"—an echo of [Genesis 2:7](#). He twice offered them peace—"shalom" in Aramaic, which meant all that makes for human well-being, not just "no conflict." How has Jesus breathed new hope, purpose and peace into you? In what ways can you tangibly share that beautiful wholeness with those around you?
- John's gospel began, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). In the end, Thomas set aside his doubt and became the first person in that gospel to fully get that, to address Jesus directly as "God." Will you join him, bow before Jesus, and say "My Lord and my God"?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are my Lord and my God. You are my Creator and my Redeemer. Because you live, I too will live forever. I thank you and I praise you today. Amen.

"Especially Peter"

FRIDAY 10.3.25 Mark 16:7, John 21:15-19

In Mark 14:29, Peter boldly told Jesus, "Even if everyone else stumbles, I won't." Just hours later, three times he swore he didn't know Jesus ([John 18:15-27](#)). Jesus didn't want that failure to haunt the rest of Peter's life. Mark 16:7 made it clear that Jesus wanted Peter ("especially") to know he was still one of "his disciples." In John 21 we see that he asked Peter to affirm his love three times, deeper and more solid because he knew Jesus forgave him even when he had failed.

- Scholar N. T. Wright said, "The three questions correspond to Peter's three denials. Three for completeness, yes, but three also for reminder. The smell of the charcoal fire lingers. Peter's night of agony—and Jesus' night of agony—returns. But because of the latter, the former can be dealt with." * Have you ever failed Jesus? Imagine yourself around that fire with Jesus. Hear him ask you, "_____, do you love me?" Let Jesus deal with all of your failures, and leave it behind.
- As we've read before, Jesus said he was the good Shepherd ([John 10:7-16](#)). To follow him, to help carry out his mission, means accepting his repeated call to feed his sheep. In what ways is God calling you and equipping you to play your role in "feeding his sheep," building up and blessing others? What challenges and rewards have you experienced in answering that call?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, like Peter, I love you. Like Peter, I sometimes fail you. Thank you for always drawing me to you and welcoming me back, like Peter, and for calling me to live your love more and more to all I meet. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone*, part 2. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004, p. 164.)

The story just began at Easter and goes on

SATURDAY 10.4.25 Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 24:46-49

Jesus made it plain that his resurrection was not the end of his story, but just the beginning of a new chapter in establishing his eternal kingdom. As people who believe Jesus is alive, we don't just sit idly by and watch God search for others. Jesus' "marching orders" to his followers were that we be his witnesses, making disciples, baptizing and teaching, actively taking part in God's work of calling humans back to God. Jesus clarified the Scriptures to his disciples, not for intellectual interest but because he appointed them to share his life-changing forgiveness. "You are witnesses," he said. God would empower them for their mission. It's still our mission, and we never pursue it alone—Jesus promised to be with us every day.

- Jesus' summary of his message in Luke 24:46-47 was "the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations." In what ways does believing that Jesus rose from the dead change your heart and life? How does the resurrection make credible for you Jesus' claim to have the divine authority to forgive your sins? In what ways are you gifted to help carry out Jesus' directive? How does Jesus' command to live out his mission shape your understanding of what it means for Resurrection to be "the church"? Jesus said, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth." In the first century, that meant that not even the mighty Roman Empire could block him from being with his followers. And no power on earth today has the authority to make Jesus abandon you. How can trusting Jesus is with you give you courage, strength and peace?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, amazingly, challengingly, wonderfully, I get to be a part of your strategic plan to reach the world. Grow me into a person who joyfully lives my role in carrying out your marching orders. Amen.