

ZIONSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Scott Shelton, April 15, 2012

Basking in the Resurrection Light – Mary Encounters the Risen Lord

John 20:10-18

Just one month ago, I was departing on a bus for the east coast as a chaperone on my 8th grade son's American Heritage trip. It was a trip that within 7 days, we saw Gettysburg, Mount Vernon, New York City, Philadelphia, and 3 days in Washington DC. Possibly Now I love history and loved the trip, despite sleep deprivation and worrying about not losing 8th grade boys in Times Square or on the mall in Washington. Maybe the most moving moment for me was the last morning at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. We went there very tired at the end of the week not expecting much, but to see the flag raising at the Fort where Francis Scott Key wrote The Star Spangled Banner. But we got a lot more. The National park Ranger used his very loud voice to get everyone's attention in the Fort, about 100 people that morning. He very passionately told the story, of how in 1814, the residents in Baltimore and F.S. Key on a ship in the harbor watched the battle during the night between the guns and cannons on the British ships and Fort McHenry.

The people saw the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air, but in the morning after the smoke and the fog had cleared from the water, our flag was still there. After this very passionate story telling, the ranger, had all of help unfurl a replica flag from 1814, 42 feet long by 34 feet wide. As we made sure the flag didn't touch the ground, he very quickly pulled this huge flag up the flag pole and we spontaneously sang the national anthem, while I, was holding back tears. I was very moved by the whole event. Now I have to be honest, I said to some of the 8th graders, "wasn't that cool!" to which they replied, "we're tired, let's get on the bus."

But the event was neat because of the passion, the purpose, and the power by which the national park ranger told the story. He was very patriotic and believed in what he was telling us.

A more important story which should also move us to tears is the retelling of the story of Jesus' resurrection. And we heard that last week and pick it up again today. We read today about someone else who had passion, purpose, plan – that Jesus sent her to do.

Last week was Easter, and we saw how Mary Magdalene came to the empty tomb of Jesus early on that Sunday morning. She was an unlikely choice to see the empty tomb first, being a woman and having been healed of demons not that long ago in the past. Let's read the story, really a continuation of the Easter story, in John 20:10-18, picking up where we left off last Sunday.

Read John 20:10-18

Mary Magdalene – who is she? She was healed of 7 demons by Jesus. And became his follower – apparently following him almost wherever he went. She relates to us not as

some super Christian or hero of the Bible, but broken and then healed. How do we relate to her?

SLIDE:

What are your “demons?”

Has God healed you? Are you grateful? Is it easy to forget to be grateful? I know for me that I am sometimes take it for granted that Jesus rose from the dead. And second he died because he wanted to save us, from sin, including my sin. One of the reminders of Easter and now the story in the moments from Easter morning and the days following is to be reminded that we need to be reminded to be grateful and not forgetful.

I recently heard the distance from the actual place of the cross to the place where the tomb – empty tomb of Jesus – is about couple of hundred yards. It is amazing that the death of the cross and the victory of the resurrection are so close physically together. It is possible that your defeat and your victory are very close together.

Mary Magdalene – healed of demons – her greatest defeat. Then close to Jesus the first to see him risen – her greatest victory. Through Jesus!

Just last Sunday – we talked about Easter – John, Peter, Mary coming to the tomb – we read in verse 10 that the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stayed behind.

SLIDE:

What does Mary Magdalene do?

1. She went
2. She wept
3. She turned
4. She told

Mary went to the tomb – she was still dedicated and committed to Jesus – maybe to take the spices to him. (Luke 24:1) Spices as a sign of love and respect – the way we might bring flowers. She was obedient – obeying the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday before returning Sunday early morning.

She went to the tomb.

Do we still go to Jesus when times are tough? What has Jesus saved you from? Is it some separation from a family member, despair, or loss of a loved one? Has he saved you from boredom, or from materialism, maybe from the American dream because it took you away from God? Has Jesus given his life so that you can have a great life with meaning, purpose, significance, more so than you could with any other kind of life?

Go to Jesus, if you have been separated, this week after Easter, go back to Jesus, he is there for you.

She wept. She believed. She showed emotion.

Do you believe, do you show emotion? I can be very even in my emotions – maybe sometimes to a fault. I want to feel more of the emotion of the salvation I have. A devotional I read last week hit me. It said that in our culture, we can often get impatient or just plain ungrateful. What's taking so long? Why is this so hard? Woe is me.

God implores us to be thankful. For another day of life, for salvation, for sunshine, for a new flower in the yard. Be thankful – tell God about it – for the little and the big – be thankful. God wants all of us – not just head knowledge, or some recognition that he is God. He wants our belief to be from the heart, not just the head.

Mary wept probably because she felt angry, frustrated, sad, that Jesus' body had been taken. Wasn't it bad enough that they killed him, now someone took the body too? When asked why she was crying by angels in the tomb, she answered saying just that, she didn't know where they had taken her Lord's body. Now Jesus appeared and spoke.

She turned.

In verse 14, it says, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she thinks he is the gardener. Apparently, she does not fully turn to him, or maybe in her grief or confusion, she can't recognize him.

Mary says in verse 15, "if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." She is a person of action – turning towards this stranger offering to take action, to do something, anything for Jesus. She doesn't realize that the person she is telling this to is Jesus. She doesn't recognize him, maybe he appears differently, or she can't fathom yet that he is alive, or maybe in her grief she doesn't take a good look. He says, "Mary."

In verse 16, John says, Mary turned again. She turned toward him – toward Jesus. William Barclay, the Bible scholar, says, like Mary, we too can be "facing in the wrong direction." When have you been facing in the wrong direction? Are you facing in the wrong direction right now? If you are, there's no better time to turn towards and face Jesus.

Jesus calls Mary by name. Names are very important. They give us identity and they did in the bible as well. Jesus uttering Mary's name in his voice, maybe even with his own inflection, the way he said her name, Mary, told her it was Jesus. Jesus said in John 10 that he is the good shepherd. And sheep recognize a stranger's voice and don't come, but the good shepherd "calls his own sheep by name" and that the sheep "follow him because they know his voice."

Jesus calls your name as well. Maybe not as face to face as he did with Mary but he does call you. You belong to him, adopted into his family, loved by the father. If you are facing in the wrong direction, Jesus is calling your name, listen for his voice, and

recognize it, turn and face him, and call out to him in response, as Mary did. She calls him Rabboni – which means “Teacher” or “my dear lord.”

After Mary turns, she grabs on to him. Jesus says don’t hold on to him, for he has not yet returned to the Father. Roger Fredrikson says, “rather than allowing her to cling to him, the risen Lord sends her on a mission to tell others what she has seen and heard.”

Do you want to hold on to Jesus? We can’t physically hold on to him today either, but just as he did with seven weeks after his death and resurrection, he sent his Holy Spirit – so that he is with us in Spirit. As we grow in our faith, we can realize that we are never alone, God is with us, Jesus is with us, through the Holy Spirit – who in a mysterious way, lives in and works through us.

Jesus says go to the brothers, the disciples, and tell them, that Jesus is returning to the father. He calls them brothers, not disciples. He has a new relationship with them, they are not just teacher to learners, but close enough to be family.

Mary told. Mary went, she wept, she turned and she told. She told the disciples in verse 18, “I have seen the Lord.” Do we tell when we are excited? You can tell by your actions, by your words, by the way you live, I have seen the Lord. Can people tell that you have had an encounter with Jesus? Are you different because of it?

Are you an unlikely candidate to tell others? Jim Capps, our pastor, told us last week about Mary, that it says in Luke 8:2, she had been possessed by seven demons, and healed by Jesus. Since then she had been one of the women who Luke says, “helped to support (Jesus and the disciples) out of their own means.” She was an unlikely follower, but she was very important to Jesus. Are you an unlikely candidate to encounter Jesus and be his messenger? I was. I was very shy, when I told some of my co-workers and friends in Dallas more than 20 years ago that I was going to seminary to become a pastor, some laughed. Others nicely questioned me, saying, “Are you sure about this? You being a pastor, standing up in front of people and talking?” They knew I got nervous talking in front of people and could lean more towards an introvert than an extrovert. I could never be in sales, I would not ask for the sale strongly enough, would too easily take no for an answer.

But I do consider it a privilege to talk about Jesus. Really just to get to talk about him. And what he’s done for me. His grace, his love, his motivation, the purpose that I have in him. Doesn’t mean talking about Jesus is always easy, it is not always easy. I still stumble over the words to use. Doesn’t mean I don’t have temptations and failures – I do fail and do have fears. But it means I can be thankful and joyful to talk about life with him – and the life with Jesus, being his follower, even though I mess it up at times, is the best life there is to live.

What can we tell? We can tell about what the resurrection means to us as Christians. It is the key to the Christian life. Jesus’ resurrection means that Jesus does what he says,

that he is God the Son as he claimed, that death is not the end, we can have new life with the same divine power that Jesus did.

I have told you before I like the *Destined* books which we study in One2One ministry here at ZPC. Here is one reason I like them the layout in book three on why we tell others like Mary did.

It talks about why we tell others, as Jesus told Mary to tell the disciples. It gives us motivation to tell others about the good news that we know.

SLIDE:

It talks about Jesus' purpose, passion, plan, and power.

SLIDE:

Jesus purpose becomes our purpose – to bring glory to God the father – to honor - I like that word – honor – to god that he deserves for who he is and what he has done. Jesus says many times that he wants to do what he did to bring glory to God the father. Our purpose too should not be to bring any glory to ourselves in the way we speak or the things we do, but so that people can see God through our actions and words.

Jesus passion becomes our passion – his love, compassion, care, for the hurting and the helpless, for beauty, for creation, for his people. It says in Matthew 9:36, that as Jesus saw the crowds of people around him, he had compassion on them. In John 11, it says, Jesus wept. We want Jesus' passion for his people and his purpose to be our passion.

Jesus plan becomes our plan – his plan to die for our sins and save the sinners. Like Mary we can tell others the plan. Jesus said in Luke to "take this message to all nations...there is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me." Jesus told Mary to be part of the plan; we are still part of his plan to get the word out today.

Jesus power becomes our power - just about 50 days later – the power of the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples in Jerusalem. They can't help but start telling people about Jesus' story and plan. This power of God in Spirit – can be in you – and is in you – if you know Jesus. We can only do so much in our own strength. The Holy Spirit guides us, give us words to say, is wise, nudges us to do right, convicts us of wrong, and empowers us to speak for God. It is the power of God in us. Even Paul, who I picture as so bold almost to be reckless for Jesus, said to the believers in Corinth, he came to them as "timid and trembling." His speeches were not wise nor persuasive, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among the people there – and they should trust God rather than humans.

Be like Mary. She went. Go to Jesus.

She wept. Be grateful, be passionate about your faith.

She took action. She turned. She turned to Jesus. She was going to honor him with spices. She offered to go get the body. She latched on to Jesus, then she ran.

She told. Tell others through Jesus. With his purpose, passion, plan and power being your purpose, passion, plan and power.

In one way, it's easy to talk about here up on this platform on a Sunday morning this week – we know about the resurrection and Easter. It sounds really good. We read about Mary Magdalene and the empty tomb and it's a moving story. But after Easter is passed, spring break is behind us, we get back to our normal lives. We get back to meetings, to work and to school, to Little League and to laundry, to TV and our favorite websites. It's easy then to forget about the joy and the miracle of Easter. And it's harder to put into words and action in real life.

Just this past Wednesday, some of us on the church staff were wrestling with making our faith real in the everyday world. The question was this: How would you describe a deep relationship with Jesus?

Here are some of our answers.

SLIDE:

A person who follows Jesus looks at the world through a Jesus lens, you see things through Jesus' eyes.

You genuinely love others. Emphasize, it's genuine.

Think about things in a Jesus way.

As a parent, help your children to be disciples, help them to become disciples, treat your children with respect.

You treat every person, every situation the way Jesus would.

SLIDE:

Jesus is your one and only, not one among many.

You know him, not just know about him.

You are transformed more than informed.

You are inspired, changed, compelled to live for Christ, not simply someone who says they made a decision for Jesus.

You have a heart for Christ alone, committed to him, and to others in relationships

Let's learn from Jesus – let's take on his passion, purpose, plan in his power. Let's learn from Mary Magdalene, the unlikely witness to Jesus resurrected, who very passionately lived out a life for Jesus. Let's challenge ourselves to be different, in today's world, even this week in our routines, as we see the world through the eyes of Jesus and the passion of Easter.

When you know Jesus, you can dream about what life with him might be like. Our church can do that too. You've been hearing about and participating in our church's dreams for our future through Vision 2020. They want more of your input, we want more of your input, to help us dream and put some specifics with those dreams. We can do so now with Kevin Schmidt leading the way.