

From Despair to Joy

Summary and Goal

In this session, we will consider John's narrative of Mary Magdalene's first encounter with Jesus following His burial. The despair Mary felt from Jesus' death on the cross was only compounded by the absence of His body from the tomb. Yet upon hearing her Teacher's voice, Mary's disposition dramatically changed. Jesus wasn't missing; He is risen! As it did with Mary, recognition of the resurrected Son of God leads us to being on mission for the resurrected Son of God.

Session Outline

1. The Despair over the Crucified Christ (John 20:11-13)
2. The Recognition of the Risen Savior (John 20:14-16)
3. The Mission Given by the Son of God (John 20:17-18)

Background Passage: John 20:11-18

Session in a Sentence

Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is the anchor of salvation and the motivation to live with joy, hope, and purpose.

Christ Connection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only the cornerstone of the gospel but also the source of joy and hope for all believers. Because Jesus died to pay the penalty of sin and rose again, we have good news to share with others.

Missional Application

Because the resurrection of Jesus proves He defeated sin and death on our behalf, we fulfill our mission of sharing the gospel with others, telling how we have come to know and love Jesus.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in this shaded area throughout the session.

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraph on page 47 in the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG) to note the significance of why people tend to prefer to hear the good news after the bad news and how this pattern is displayed in John's presentation of Mary Magdalene's experience on the first Easter morning.

Good news and bad news. In life we hear both good and bad news on an everyday basis. Based on recent studies, roughly four out of five people prefer to hear the bad news first when it comes to situations where there is both positive and negative information to acknowledge. Why? In summary form, research seems to indicate that human beings prefer to process information with conclusions that leave us with a sense of meaning, transcendence, and poignancy—in other words, endings that elevate.¹

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



Do you prefer to hear the good news or the bad news first? Why? *(be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)*

SAY: The empty tomb and missing body of Jesus did not amount to good news for Jesus' disciples initially but instead left them in confusion and despair. However, the disillusionment that Jesus' death had brought them soon gave way to ecstatic realization in seeing and hearing their risen Lord.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will consider John's narrative of Mary Magdalene's first encounter with Jesus following His burial. The despair Mary felt from Jesus' death on the cross was only compounded by the absence of His body from the tomb. Yet upon hearing her Teacher's voice, Mary's disposition dramatically changed. Jesus wasn't missing; He is risen! As it did with Mary, recognition of the resurrected Son of God leads us to being on mission for the resurrected Son of God.

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Point 1: The Despair over the Crucified Christ (John 20:11-13)

READ John 20:11-13 (DDG p. 48).

¹¹ But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him."

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 48) to note Mary Magdalene's appropriate longing to be in Jesus' presence but her lack of belief in who He is in terms of His power over death.

Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus had freed from the presence of demons (see Luke 8:2), went to Jesus' tomb seeking her Lord's presence during a distressing time. Though her intuition to go to Jesus was good, the obvious problem with her plan was that, at least in her mind, Jesus was still dead. As was often the case with Jesus' disciples, and with us, Mary felt a certain attachment to Jesus but did not believe in His power to conquer even death, not in that moment at least. Despite her misunderstanding of Jesus' final destiny, her longing to see Jesus was profoundly good and right.

- Consider the honesty of John's account of how Jesus' followers discovered that the tomb was empty. It does not paint them as being perceptive about the unfolding of the events. John's Gospel was not written to venerate the disciples as a competent bunch. In verses 11-13, in particular, Mary Magdalene's initial reaction to the reality of the empty tomb was despair and confusion—not the response of someone who was confident in her Lord's foretelling of His impending betrayal, arrest, execution, *and* eventual resurrection. She didn't seem to put any stock in Jesus' foretelling of these events and His accuracy regarding His own death (see Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 20:17-19). Per the usual, the Bible's depiction of the people God uses at pivotal points in His plan is not flattering but truthful.
- The angels' presence inside the tomb did not tip off Mary that something unusual was happening. This might have been because these two angels seemed to look like men dressed in white. Nonetheless, these angels initiated a conversation with Mary, one that would eventually result in her despair turning into joy. More on that later. But we should note here that the angels, in whatever form they took at that moment, whether supernatural or modest, were not enough to deter her sorrow, for she desired above all else to see and be with the Lord Jesus.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



During a distressing time, what tends to be your default attitude, behavior, or recourse? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 48) to highlight that we should not criticize Mary for expressing sorrow over Jesus' death but should nonetheless learn from her example by not living as if sorrow is the final outcome.

Those of us who are familiar with the four Gospel accounts of the resurrection sometimes neglect these narratives' significance for coping with death. Death is always sad, even in the case of Jesus. While we should not criticize Mary for expressing sorrow over Jesus' death, we nonetheless should learn from her example and avoid living as if sorrow is the final outcome. Because of the truth of the gospel, death doesn't get the last word. With Jesus, there is hope beyond the grave. Mary would soon learn this firsthand.

Commentary: "Though unaware of the resurrection as a fact, [Mary] had laid hold upon the supreme principle from which its necessity flows. Once given the intimate bond of faith between a sinner and his Savior, there can be no death to such a relationship. Mary, in her simple dependence on Jesus, had risen to the point where she sought in him life and sought it ever more abundantly ... From Mary's experience let us learn to do better. What the Lord expects from us at such seasons is not [that we] abandon ourselves to unreasoning sorrow, but trustingly to look sorrow in the face, to scan its features, to search for the help and hope which, as surely as God is our Father, must be there. In such trials there can be no comfort for us so long as we stand outside weeping. If only we will take the courage to fix our gaze deliberately upon the stern countenance of grief, and enter unafraid into the darkest recesses of our trouble, we shall find terror gone because the Lord has been there before us, and, coming out again, has left the place transfigured, making out of it by the grace of his resurrection a house of life, the very gate of heaven."²

SAY: Death is undeniably sad, and Mary's emotions about Jesus' death at this time are certainly understandable. However, she had not lingered and peered into the empty tomb long enough. What Mary had yet to realize was that with Jesus, death is never the final outcome. Instead, resurrection is. Life does not give way to death. In Christ, death gives way to life forevermore. The bad news precedes the good news; death precedes resurrection.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



When have you prematurely abandoned hope only to see later how God was moving you toward deeper resurrection hope? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

Point 2: The Recognition of the Risen Savior (John 20:14-16)

READ John 20:14-16 (DDG p. 49).

¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. ¹⁵ “Woman,” Jesus said to her, “why are you crying? Who is it that you’re seeking?” Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you’ve carried him away, tell me where you’ve put him, and I will take him away.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!”—which means “Teacher.”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 49) to point out the peculiar, supernatural nature of Mary’s capacity to recognize Jesus by the way He said her name.

He said her name. That’s all it took. In order to raise Mary’s countenance and bring forth resurrection faith in her, Mary had to hear *Him* say her name. No, it wasn’t the gardener, as she first supposed; it was the second and last Adam, the One who came to undo the thorns and thistles the first Adam left us with. Mary knew at that moment that she was speaking with her Teacher, her Lord. When the risen Jesus calls our name, we know in the very core of our being precisely who is speaking to us.



Voices from Church History

“Observe that the tears shed for Christ do not lose their reward, nor is it long before love for him bears fruit. Rather, his grace and rich restitution will follow closely in the wake of pain.”³

—Cyril of Alexandria
(c. 376-444)

- In John 10, Jesus referred to Himself as the good shepherd (see Ps. 23; Ezek. 34). If Jesus is our shepherd and we are His sheep, then we know His voice and know it distinctly from the voices of strangers (John 10:2-5). Moreover, Jesus told the Jewish establishment of His day that they did not believe Him to be the Messiah because they were not of His sheep (vv. 25-26). Jesus then made the point in more positive terms: “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me” (v. 27). This is true for us and was true for Mary. In calling out to her, the good shepherd, who had laid down His life for His sheep, was demonstrating that He had also taken up His life again (see vv. 11,14,17-18).

Illustration: Parents should be able to resonate with the shepherd-sheep analogy. Children from an early point in their development, even from the womb, are thought to be able to recognize their parents’ voices. Hearing sounds by week sixteen of gestation, a baby can begin to distinguish his or her father’s voice from inside the womb at about thirty-two weeks, as most research indicates. The baby thus continues to recognize his or her father’s voice once born.⁴ As babies have the natural capacity to discern a paternal voice from among others, so too do Jesus’ disciples have the supernatural capacity to distinguish their Savior’s voice from a sea of competing chatter.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 49) to draw a parallel between Mary’s recognition of the risen Jesus with how the Emmaus road disciples recognized Him once He broke bread with them. Add that today we encounter the risen Jesus as we read the Bible, see repentant sinners baptized, and take the Lord’s Supper.

Like the disciples on the Emmaus road (see Luke 24:13-35), Mary did not recognize Jesus immediately. Just as Jesus’ breaking and blessing of bread prompted the two disciples to realize Jesus was reclining with them, Jesus caused Mary to realize who was speaking to her by saying her name. Similar to how the two disciples perceived Jesus to be among them in the breaking of bread, we should recognize that Jesus is with us as we take the bread and the cup in the Lord’s Supper. And as Mary heard Jesus calling to her near the empty tomb, we likewise should hear His voice calling to us in and through the Scriptures.

Application: While we have not laid eyes on or touched the risen Jesus physically as did the first disciples, we nonetheless have access to Him through *God’s Word* and His church’s ordinances (sometimes called “sacraments”), namely, *baptism* and the *Lord’s Supper*.

- *The Bible.* Jesus taught that the Scriptures bore witness of Him, referring specifically to what we know today as the Old Testament (John 5:39,46-47; cf. Rom. 1:1-4). As an extension of His ministry, Jesus authorized the apostles and their associates to provide for the church with doctrine and instruction subsequent to His resurrection and ascension, which in written form came to be known collectively as the New Testament (see John 14:25-26; 16:12-15; Eph. 2:20). Thus, in order to know the truthfulness of the resurrection and encounter the risen Jesus, the Bible itself proves sufficient for us (Luke 16:31; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).
 - *Baptism.* Immersion in water does not in itself save us (see 1 Pet. 3:21), but baptism points to the ground of our salvation, specifically our union by grace through faith with the risen and exalted Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-12). When we receive baptism or witness someone else being baptized, we are observing a sign of salvation that depicts the reality of salvation obtained for us in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Every time the church baptizes a repentant sinner, we are proclaiming, “He is risen; He is risen indeed!”
 - *Lord’s Supper.* Jesus identified His body with the bread and His blood with the cup (see Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). The fact that we are to continue this practice until Jesus returns thus incorporates the belief that He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 11:26). We are not merely honoring a life that has come and gone, but instead, in the Lord’s Supper we are communing with the resurrected Jesus, and with fellow believers, through the Holy Spirit by the consecrated use of these sacred symbols (1 Cor. 10:16)
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



Why do you think we often overlook how the risen Jesus is made present to us in God’s Word and in the church’s ordinances? (we are just going through the motions; we are not taught well the biblical implications of the church’s ordinances; we forget Jesus’ promise to be with us to the end of the age; we don’t think we need Jesus’ presence)

Point 3: The Mission Given by the Son of God (John 20:17-18)

READ: Ask a volunteer to read John 20:17-18 (DDG p. 50).

¹⁷ “Don’t cling to me,” Jesus told her, “since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what he had said to her.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 50) to explain why Jesus exhorted Mary not to cling to Him, namely, because His impending ascension meant that the Holy Spirit would soon come.

“Don’t cling to me.” Why was it good that Jesus went away? Put simply, if Jesus didn’t leave, then the Holy Spirit wouldn’t come (see John 7:39; 16:7; cf. Acts 2:32-33). While the Holy Spirit was active throughout the Old Testament (see Gen. 1:2; Ex. 31:1-11; 1 Sam. 16:13-15; Isa. 59:21), the Spirit came in a more spectacular way following Jesus’ ascension. Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, marked the dawn of a new age, an age where Jesus had officially taken the throne as the Messiah at the Father’s right hand, ruling His kingdom and empowering His disciples for mission by the Spirit.

- *“Since I have not yet ascended to the Father.”* We read and hear often about the cross and the resurrection, but we seldom focus on the importance of Jesus’ ascension. In order to get some perspective about the significance and purpose of Jesus’ ascension, theologian Michael F. Bird offers the following seven points:
 - 1) Jesus ascended to heaven so that He can send the Holy Spirit to His followers (John 7:39; 14:16-17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7).
 - 2) After Jesus ascended, there was an expectation that His followers would worship Jesus and witness to Him (Matt. 28:9,16-20; Luke 24:52; Acts 1:8).
 - 3) Jesus’ ascension means that He has been exalted to the Father’s right hand and received divine authority (Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 26:64; Acts 2:34-36; Phil. 2:9-11).
 - 4) The ascension demonstrated that God placed a human being as His representative ruler over creation (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:5-6; Heb. 1:5-11; 2:5-9).
 - 5) Believers have begun to share in the reign of Jesus by virtue of their union with Him (Luke 22:29-30; Eph. 2:6-7; Col. 3:1-4).
 - 6) Jesus’ work of intercession continued in His heavenly session (John 17; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 10:19-23).
 - 7) Jesus will return in the same manner that He left (Acts 1:11).⁵

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 50).

Christ’s Exaltation: Christ was exalted when God **raised** Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He **ascended** to the Father’s right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He **returns**.

Essential Doctrine “Christ’s Exaltation”: Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ’s exaltation. Christ was exalted when God **raised** Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He **ascended** to the Father’s right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He **returns**. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 50) to accent that what was true for Mary should also be true for us: *recognizing the risen Jesus leads to being on mission for the risen Jesus.*

It’s one thing to see an empty tomb; it’s another thing to see our risen Lord. The pattern that is true of Mary in this passage should also be true of us: *recognizing the risen Jesus leads to being on mission for the risen Jesus.* Though the risen Jesus doesn’t appear before us in His glorified flesh as He did for Mary, the same resurrected Jesus nonetheless has transformed us through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor. 3:17–4:6).

- *“Go to my brothers.”* We should take note that Jesus refers to the disciples as “my brothers” when speaking to Mary. Jesus considered His disciples to be family, those who share a common God and a common Father. We as Jesus’ disciples receive a new identity and status by our common faith in Him. We become children of God entitled to call God our Father through our adoption in the eternal Son of God (John 1:12-13; Gal. 4:4-7).
 - *“To my God and your God.”* Not only does Jesus speak here about His impending ascension but also about His relationship to the Father—and by extension, our relationship to the Father. Jesus is the unique Son of God who is equal to God the Father according to His divine nature (John 5:17-18), and yet, He can also refer to the Father as His God according to His human nature. Thus, we can say of Jesus, like Thomas several verses later, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Yet we should also confess that we worship the same God as does Jesus, our brother in humanity (Heb. 2:11-12,17).
 - *“I have seen the Lord.”* Mary heeded Jesus’ instruction not to cling to Him by leaving to announce His resurrection to the disciples. Mary had seen Jesus for the first time since He died, only now He was no longer a lifeless corpse. Thus, she was moved to announce her sighting of the risen Savior to the other disciples.
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PACK ITEM 7: SING HIS GLORIES: Read the **Godfrey Thring quote** on this poster and ask group members the following question.



What are some ways Jesus’ exaltation relates to our mission to proclaim the gospel? (*apart from Jesus’ resurrection, we would have no good news to proclaim; Jesus’ ascension preceded the coming of the Holy Spirit, who gives us direction, words, and power; we proclaim Jesus as our living Savior and Lord who rules over all things from the Father’s right hand and will complete the extent of His rule when He comes again; evangelism is exalting the risen Savior before those who do not yet believe in Him and the salvation He has accomplished for us*)

My Mission

EXPLAIN: Like Mary Magdalene, we must face the grim reality that is death. However, also like Mary, we can stare back at death without fear and despair because we share with her a risen Savior who conquered death. And again, like Mary, knowing the resurrected Jesus compels us to tell others about Him who has ascended to the Father. After the despair of death comes the joy of resurrection. As for Mary and for us, death is part of the bad news, but thankfully this isn't the whole story. Death hurts, yes, but its effect is not final when Jesus is on the scene. So often this fallen world brings upon us a downward countenance, but the truth of Jesus' resurrection and ascension is forever there to lift our heads. Since our risen Lord has called each of us by name, we must respond, like Mary did, by heeding our Teacher's instruction to "go and tell." Christian, why are you crying? With eyes of faith, you too can say, "I have seen the Lord!"

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 51), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because the resurrection of Jesus proves He defeated sin and death on our behalf, we fulfill our mission of sharing the gospel with others, telling how we have come to know and love Jesus.

- **How will you respond in faith to the true, historical bodily resurrection of Jesus?**
- **What are some practices your group can develop to regularly remind one another about the presence and authority of the risen Jesus in your lives?**
- **With whom will you share the good news of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension?**



Voices from Church History

"The very declarations of Scripture that excite our tears of love wipe away those very tears by promising us the sight of our Redeemer again."⁶

—Gregory the Great (d. 604)

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, thank You for saving us from death and lifting us from despair through Your Son's resurrection. We praise You for giving us tangible proof of Your faithfulness with the Gospel records of eyewitness testimony to not only the empty tomb but also to the risen Jesus. Help us by the Holy Spirit to hear our risen Savior's voice in Scripture so that we might obey His commission to go and tell others about Him. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 52-54), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 55) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 52-54) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 55) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 52-54) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 4** as a part of point 3 in the session: **A true disciple wants to be with Jesus but also wants to share Jesus with others—and that's exactly what Mary did. Recognizing the risen Jesus led her to being on mission for the risen Jesus.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 2: "Rather than look down in despair, we need to listen for the voice of our living Savior in Scripture."**
- **Day 3: "Since Jesus has called us by name, we have no excuse for failing to heed His commands. We have heard His voice and know to listen to our shepherd."**



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 55) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to share about what brings them despair at times and how the gospel of the risen Jesus has helped them to endure despair.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: The Despair over the Crucified Christ (John 20:11-13)

“When Mary bent down to look into the tomb, she saw two angelic figures dressed in white and seated on the stone shelf where Jesus’ body had been laid (20:11b-12). We are not told whether she recognized them as angels, but she did answer their question. She told them she was weeping because of her love for her Lord and her inability to anoint his body (20:13). She did not even consider the possibility of resurrection. At this point, she sensed someone standing behind her and turned to speak to him, without recognizing that he was Jesus (20:14). She may not even have bothered to look at him, simply assuming that he was the man responsible for maintaining the garden in which the tomb lay (19:41). However, there may be other reasons too, for the resurrected Jesus was not immediately recognized by all who saw him (21:4-7; see also Luke 24:16,31).”⁷

“[Mary] bent over to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white. Notably, the theme of fear, which is usually associated with such manifestations, is absent here (cf. Matt. 28:2-10 pars.). Angels or celestial visitors are often depicted as clad in white [see Dan. 10:5-6; Ezek. 9:2; Rev. 15:6; cf. 1 Enoch 87:2]. The appearance of angels in pairs is likewise not uncommon in descriptions of heavenly visitations [see Acts 1:10; cf. 2 Macc. 3:26]. All the angels do is ask Mary a question, posed from the vantage point of the resurrection: ‘Woman, why are you crying?’ This question constitutes a call for Mary to set aside her anguish and recognize the reality of Jesus’ return to life.”⁸

Point 2: The Recognition of the Risen Savior (John 20:14-16)

“Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb, and lingered in her grief. At first she thought Jesus was a gardener, and indeed, he is; for where the first Adam failed his work in the garden, the last Adam has wondrously succeeded. The grain of gospel wheat died, and was planted in a garden tomb, and now the grand harvest begins (cf. 12:24-25). It wasn’t until Jesus spoke her name that Mary recognized him. The Good Shepherd had laid down his life and taken it up again. Now he called one of his sheep by name and she recognized his life-giving voice (10:4). The gospel is no mere invitation; it is a summons to glory. Each of us must move from the general of John 3:16 (God’s love for the world generally) to the personal of Galatians 2:20 (God’s love for me specifically).”⁹

At this point, Jesus revealed himself to Mary by tenderly calling her name. Amazed and delighted, she cried out, *Rabboni*, meaning ‘my teacher’ (20:16). Jesus had been called ‘Rabbi’ (Teacher) by his disciple and others (1:38,49; 3:2), but Mary’s cry indicated the personal nature of her relationship to her Lord. She stands for all the sheep who hear and respond to the voice of the good shepherd, who ‘calls his own sheep by name’ (10:3-4).”¹⁰

“Jesus’ salutation, **Woman**, was the polite way of addressing a woman (v. 15). She did not recognize His voice then, but immediately when He uttered her name, she knew it was the Lord. Mary used the affectionate and respectful address **Rabbouni** ([Aramaic], ‘my master, my teacher’). When Jesus said to Mary, ‘**Don’t cling to Me**’ (v. 17), He was not concerned about being touched since He asked Thomas to touch Him (v. 27). Rather, He wanted Mary to realize that He was there only temporarily. His return to the Father was imminent. **Brothers** included more than His siblings. The disciples now were related to Him in a new way because of His representing them to the Father (Heb. 2:11-12). Jesus used **My Father and your Father** because Mary’s relationship to God was different than His own (John 20:17).”¹¹

Point 3: The Mission Given by the Son of God (John 20:17-18)

“**I have not yet ascended** does not deny the fact that Jesus’ spirit went to the presence of the Father in heaven at the moment of his death (see 19:30) but affirms that his bodily ascension after his resurrection had not yet occurred (see Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11).

To my Father and your Father maintains a distinction as to the sense in which God is Christ’s God and Father and the sense in which this is true for the disciples (see John 1:14). But he also calls believers his **brothers**, implying a personal relationship (see 15:13-14; also Heb. 2:12,17).”¹²

“What can touching be, but believing? We touch Christ, you see, by faith, and it is better not to touch him with the hand and to touch him with faith than to feel him with the hand and not touch him with faith. It was not a great matter to touch Christ; the Jews touched him when they seized him, they touched him when they bound him, touched him when they hung him up; they touched him, and by touching him in a bad way, they lost what they touched ... If you have thought of Christ only as a man, you have touched him on earth. If you have believed Christ is Lord, equal to the Father, then you have touched him when he has ascended to the Father.”¹³

References

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