

## Meeting the Risen Christ: Jesus Meets Us in Our Sadness

John 20:1-10 || Pastor Matt Trexler || 24 April 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,  
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,  
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.  
– CG Mission Statement*

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**Icebreaker:** What is your favorite movie and in that movie what mission is the main character(s) on?

**Worship:** [Psalm 34](#) (Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?)

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**Sermon Summary for [John 20:11-18](#)** (Read aloud before reading the sermon summary.)

It's easy to find ourselves greeting Easter with bright colors, sugary candy and a cheeriness that can give a false impression, as if things are all right with the world. But the real setting of Easter is quiet, darkness, loneliness. Mary goes out to the tomb weeping; that's our context. But it's in those tears – in that heartbreak and darkness of the world – that Jesus meets us and turns our mourning into a mission. Because if Easter indeed happened, then there's nothing more important to our lives and to the fate of Creation than the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

**Our Mourning** // This account begins with a mystery: *What has happened to Jesus's body?* We often forget the worry and grief in these early moments. No one went to Christ's tomb and said, "Hallelujah! He is risen!" This is the real world. When Mary finds the empty tomb, she immediately assumes the body has been stolen. Not even the disciples understand how the Scriptures have been fulfilled. We too have the same confusion, finding ourselves unfolded in the mystery of why: *If Jesus was the One who was going to save us, why did He die? Why does God do the things He does, the way He does? And why won't He do what we want or expect Him to do?*

Many times, our only real response is the response that Mary has: letting the feelings take hold of us: weeping, feeling the emptiness of what's been taken away. But how often do we give ourselves permission to feel what we feel – to be honest before God? Or do we put on a brave face and either minimize or overly spiritualize what's going on in our hearts? The first step to dealing with our sadness is to be honest about it. As we see with Mary, honesty about our mourning brings us to the miracle of Easter. Angels appear and ask her, "*Why are you weeping?*" It's her weeping that brings Jesus to her.

**Our Messiah** // As Dale Bruner said, "*On Jesus's authority, human beings in deep sadness are in God's hands more than any other time.*" Jesus promises the same in the beatitudes: "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*" If we draw near to our Lord, He will draw near to us. Oftentimes it is in the sad and lonely places where we can begin to hear our Savior's voice. We may not recognize it at first – just as Mary didn't – but eventually we hear Jesus calling to us in our grief. The Good Shepherd knows His flock and calls them by name. It might feel like a longing has been stirred in us; we're not even sure where it's coming from. But that's how the Risen Christ works. Tenderly, patiently, He calls us into His Kingdom. He knows us completely, even giving us the mustard seed of desire that yearns for His presence.

**Our Mission** // Jesus tells Mary to go to the disciples with the joyous news of His resurrection. But surprisingly, He refers to them as brothers – these same unfaithful, cowardly men who deserted Him on the eve of His death. This is utterly gracious love. This is the forgiveness of sins. This is Jesus, Who wants us to know that even in our sin and failure we are not only His friends and companions, but members of His family. Christ's death and resurrection has changed the world, unleashing His power and forgiveness and gracious love throughout creation.

Forgiveness is a power, a force greater than sin. And Christ's Good News is that He doesn't just give us our own forgiveness, but the power to extend this grace-filled love into our communities. We are given the opportunity and the mission to announce that healing and hope have come in person to the world. Sometimes, it feels like the darkness is winning, but the Lord has been raised in the midst of the world. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Because the resurrection is real, and death does not get the final word.

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**Discussion Questions** *(You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)*

#### **Our Mourning**

- Did anything stand out in the scripture reading?
- What do we learn about Mary's character through her mourning?
  - Why do you think she was able to remain in her mourning while Peter and John left?
- What is the calling to us through Mary's mourning?
  - Describe someone you know who has the emotional honesty and rawness we see in Mary.

#### **Our Messiah**

- How does Jesus call her in this story?
- What impact does this have on her?
  - Do you find the reality that Jesus is "calling us in our sadness" comforting?
- Do you hear your Messiah calling you by name and leading you into mission?
  - What has this looked like for you recently?

#### **Our Mission**

- What mission does Jesus give Mary?
- How would this story be different for Mary and for us if Jesus had not given her this mission?
  - Mourning turned into mission. This is "resurrection hope." In what ways do you see this happening in or around you?
  - What areas of your life or others do you want God to break in with resurrection hope?
- How can we pray for one another tonight and throughout the week?

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## **Prayer**

Continue to pray for the situation in Ukraine, for peace, Christ's mercies and intervention. Pray for the Pastoral Search Team. For this week's Prayer Guide for personal or group use, click [HERE](#).

## **Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude**

Break into groups of three to compose a 6-8 sentence prayer together in which you express your heart of gratitude to God for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf. You may wish to follow this form:

- Adoration – What can I praise God for in light of what this passage teaches me about the resurrection?
- Confession – What sin can I confess because of what this teaches me?
- Thanksgiving – What can I thank God for in light of what Jesus has done for me?
- Supplication – What do I need to ask of God in order to grow in light of this?