

# *The Parish of Wellow*

## A walk through the Bible with the people of God

### 3. Mary Magdalene the Embalmer

#### John 20:1-18

#### Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

## 1. Sermon Passage

### John 20:1-18

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.

4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,

7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

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

9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

10 Then the disciples returned to their homes.

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;

12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, '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 that he had said these things to her.

## 2. Sermon Notes

### 2.1 Mary goes to pay her respects and finish embalming Jesus' body - verse 1

- That is all Mary was doing that first Easter Sunday morning - paying her final respects by going and completing the unfinished work of embalming Jesus' body.
- What she discovers is an empty tomb.

### 2.2 Mary rushes to tell the disciples her news - verse 2

- Mary returns to tell the disciples: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

### 2.3 Peter and John go to check her story - verses 3-10

- Peter and John run towards the tomb.
- John's the younger of the two so he outruns Peter and gets there first.
- But he doesn't go in. He stops outside, bends over and looks in and sees the strips of linen lying there.
- Simon Peter on the other hand, ever the impetuous one, goes straight in. He too sees the strips of linen lying there along with the burial cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head.
- John also goes inside then, sees that Jesus is no longer wrapped in the cloths and, we're told, he believes.
- But what does he believe? That Jesus is risen, though he still didn't understand the Scriptures that had predicted it.

#### 2.4 Mary remains and meets two angels - verses 11-13

- Mary waits by the tomb weeping.
- Mary looks inside the tomb and she sees something new.
- She sees two angels seated either end of where Jesus' body had been.
- The place of his death was between two thieves, but the place of his burial is between two angels.
- They ask her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" They seem to be genuinely confused at her distress. From their perspective of course there's no need for tears. But if they're confused, Mary is even more so. "They've taken my Lord away and I don't know where he is."

#### 2.5 Mary meets the risen Christ - verses 13-16

- Mary notices a man standing behind her. We're told it's Jesus, but Mary doesn't recognise him.
- Jesus asks her the same question: "Woman, why are you weeping?" Then he adds a second question: "Whom are looking for?"
- Is this a challenge? Or is a test for Mary? "Is he asking her: do you know who Jesus really is?" If you really understand who Jesus is, why would you be looking here?
- Or is Jesus saying to her, "Are you prepared to be counted among my followers still? Even after I've been publicly shamed and put to death on a cross?"
- Jesus reveals himself to her in the most profound way: with a single word. He simply says "Mary." Instantly she recognises him and calls out to him in joy with her own personal way of addressing him, "Rabboni", "My own dear Teacher."
- The good shepherd calls his own sheep by name and they recognise his voice. Mary recognises Jesus as he calls her personally.

#### 2.6 Things have changed - verse 17a

- Mary tries to hold on to him, Jesus tells her she's not to.
- This is no longer the time for physical contact with Jesus.
- That will come again when we join him in the Father's kingdom, but for now our relating to Jesus is by faith in union with the Holy Spirit.

#### 2.7 Mary is told to spread the good news which she does immediately - verses 17b - 18

- Mary is given a task to perform. She's to go and tell others about Jesus.
- The first lesson she has to learn after discovering that Jesus is alive is that a relationship with Jesus implies sharing him with others.
- Her first impulse was to hold on to him so she wouldn't lose him again, but in fact the only way to hang on to him was by sharing him.
- The first person sent by Jesus to spread the Good News of his resurrection, was a woman.

#### 2.8 We can meet the risen Christ to

- God has made it possible for us, too, to encounter Jesus personally.
- Not in the same tangible way that Mary and the disciples did, but through His Holy Spirit and by faith.

### 3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 What is the truth that Mary stumbles across that first Easter Sunday? Why is this truth central to the Christian faith?

3.2 Each of us like Mary, who was the first apostle, is commissioned to spread the good news about Jesus. When was the last time we took that commission seriously? What would Jesus have us do this week to spread the good news about him?

3.3 A close friend of yours says that they are struggling with belief in the resurrection. How would you respond?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293