

SERMON

May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts please you, O Lord.

=====

What an incredible story we're given here about an incredible woman, Mary Magdalene.

The Gospels don't give us much insight into who Mary is, but we do know a few things.

One thing we know is that Mary along with Joanna and Susanna provided for Jesus and the Twelve out of their own resources. This would indicate to me that these were likely very well to do woman of wealth and influence.

Another thing we know about Mary is that she was with Jesus at the crucifixion when all the other disciples fled. This indicates to me that she is a very strong woman of faith.

The incredible things that we know from the Gospel accounts is Mary is the first to the tomb, the first to see the resurrected Jesus, and the first to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' resurrection. That is absolutely incredible.

I'm not sure I know many people with that much dedication, with that much faith and conviction.

Over the years many stories have been told about Mary. She has been depicted as a prostitute, a sibyl, a mystic, a celibate nun, a passive helpmeet, and a feminist icon.

I don't know why so many stories exist. I'm sure there might be some nefarious reason for some stories or some effort to discredit her, but these are only speculation at best.

What we cannot refute is that Mary is a very central figure in the story of the resurrection. And after she tells the disciples and Peter and the other disciple come, view the empty tomb and leave, Mary stays. Just like she stayed at the cross.

Mary is desperate to know what happened to Jesus' body.

And no one will help her, not the angels she sees in the tomb, not even the gardener.

The only help comes from Jesus.

What a fitting message for all of us. A message echoed throughout scriptures.

God creates humankind, man and women together. That's helpful. It's nice to be here. But we're not just created, we're created in the image of God.

Moses tells us that the Lord will fight for us, and all we have to do is to keep still. How often do we want to control things, everything? We want to take control because we believe that God helps those who help themselves. But Moses gives us a different message. God helps. And all we need to do is nothing.

Saturday March 30, 2024 — **Easter Vigil, Year B**

And here we have Mary, feeling lost and alone, weeping and wondering what happened to Jesus' body. Then Jesus comes along and calls her by name. Gently. Solemnly.

Jesus knows that Mary has been there with Him the whole time. Throughout His ministry. At the foot of the cross, at the tomb, and now at the resurrection.

Mary has been there. It's no wonder Jesus appears to Mary first.

Jesus appears and calls her name. Mary.

She immediately recognizes Jesus. She is so elated! I can't begin to imagine her response. Her joy, her excitement, all her doubts are gone, all her fears are washed away.

Mary is there and Jesus did all the rest.

We are saved, through no act of our own, but through Jesus Christ.

We are forgiven our sins and given a second, a third, a 73rd chance. Not because we deserve it, but by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We walk alone and Jesus is with us.

There is nothing we need to do; nothing we can do; to warrant this Love and Forgiveness. We are here, and Jesus does the rest.

I'd like to add my own story about Mary Magdalen. A story of a strong woman with incredible faith. Created in the image of God. A story of a person who leads with her heart, follows Jesus, and sets a wonderful example for us.

Let us pray:

O God, you are the creator of the world, the liberator of your people, and the wisdom of the earth. By the resurrection of your Son free us from our fears, restore us in your image, and ignite us with your light, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN**

NOTES AND FOOTNOTES

GENESIS 1:1--2:4A (Creation)

God created humankind, male and female created together. / .¹ / .² / .³

EXODUS 14:10-31; 15:20-21 (Deliverance At The Red Sea)

¹⁴“The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.” Miriam’s song v15:21/ .¹ / .² / .³

ISAIAH 55:1-11 (Salvation Freely Offered To All)

²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? ^{7b}let them (the wicked and the unrighteous) return to the Lord, that [God] may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. / .¹ / .² / .³

DANIEL 3:1-29 (Deliverance From The Fiery Furnace)

^{29b}Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.” Probably the wrong response for the right reason. / .¹ / .² / .³

New Testament Reading: Romans 6:3-11 (baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection)

⁸But [since] we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. Since we have been baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven and we will have everlasting life in heaven. / .¹ / .² / .³

GOSPEL: John 20:1-18 (Mary Magdalene sees Jesus after the resurrection)

Mary sees the empty tomb first and runs to tell the disciples. Peter and John then come to the tomb and enter it, and afterward return home. But Mary remains at the tomb weeping. Mary of Magdala was one of the women who stayed with Jesus, even to the Crucifixion. She was present at the tomb, the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection and the first to preach the “Good News” Jesus’ resurrection. / no one gives Mary any help except Jesus. .¹ / .² / .³

Saturday March 30, 2024 — **Easter Vigil, Year B**

WELCOME AND GREETING

Good Evening!

Welcome to Gethsemane! We're so glad you're here.

Tomorrow we will burn the burdens we have placed on the Lenten cross. So that you will carry them no more.

Please note that we live stream the service. During communion the live streaming is paused to protect those not wishing to appear on camera. Children are able to use the front pew during the Children's Sermon to avoid being on camera.

I need **2 volunteers** for the offertory.

This is the night of salvation! At the Vigil of Easter, we gather around fire, word, water, bread, and wine, proclaiming through story and song that ours is a God who continuously brings life out of death. On this night we experience again the heart of God's baptismal promise and the center of our faith: we are claimed and cleansed, renewed in the death and resurrection of Christ. We gather with all the saints of every time and place to celebrate the good news: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

If you wish you may join me in the Narthex.