

Intro - Open to John 20:11-18

Have you ever gotten bad advice before? Someone told you to get something or do something and it just backfired?

My favorite story about this was in my last year in college, I would get dinner with a few guy friends each week. Every guy there but me was in a serious or long-term relationship. They began the night just complaining about their girlfriends, “she made me do this and it drove me nuts”, “I can’t believe it and I should just stand up to her”. They all start scheming a group date intervention. That with their combined wisdom of 2 pennies to rub together they were going to tell their girlfriends they were tired of their treatment. I was just sitting there, and they were making plans and giving advice that was going to leave us all single at the next get together.

So I spoke up and said, “guys this is a terrible idea. They are going to feel ambushed and this is going to backfire.” My friend told me 2 years later that if I hadn’t done that, he wouldn’t be married to his wife.

Now, my two dimes of wisdom may have saved the day that day, but I will tell you, if it wasn’t for the word of God, I would have no wisdom to give anyone.

Some bad advice I have received was, “Travis, don’t be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good.” It sounds clever, it even sounds biblical, but I believe that this is practical advice that shifts our focus off of spiritual truths and into our own earthly wisdom. Some monks and those who are buried in books with no relationships may be in need of this saying. Yet I don’t believe that is our primary temptation here on earth. In our text this morning, we see how **The resurrected Christ shifts our focus from earthly to heavenly joy & purpose.**

Pray

One – Despondent

Read John 20:11-15

We have to step into Mary’s shoes or sandals for a second. The key word through these few verses is weeping. It is the main activity, oh and talking about weeping. She is lost in her tears.

Now let’s take a moment to think about the Bible’s view of pain, lament and tears. There is a whole category of Psalms, the song book of the Bible, the poetry of Israel, that is about sadness over the tragedies of life. These are called the Psalms of Lament. David, in **Psalm 6**, says that his tears fill up his bed. **Psalm 56**, God collects up the tears of the psalmist. Outside of the Psalms, women are mentioned many times as coming to God in their tears. Hagar, Sarah’s servant in **Genesis 21** is sent away into the wilderness and God draws near her. Hannah, Samuel’s mother, in **Samuel 1**, weeps bitterly at the temple longing for a child, so God notices her and gives her a child.

Tears are the proper expression of sorrow. We must note that in the face of tragedy, tears are right. The reality for us this morning, is how does God begin to address Mary in her tears.

She weeps outside the tomb; she looks into the tomb still weeping. There she finds 2 angels. It seems that these are the same two angels that had scared away the Roman guards, rolled away the stone and told the other women that **“He is not here”**. So here they are waiting for Mary, and they speak to her in her tears, **“Woman, why are you weeping?”**.

Now, we don’t find that phrasing polite today. To call someone woman, it can sound condescending but we have to put away our idioms and take up the way they used it. The same way that Jesus addressed his mother in chapter 2, **“Woman, what does this have to do with me?”** The Son of Man speaks to his mother this way, I think we can assume it is not an insult. Yet, it is a kind rebuke. The implication is, “why are you weeping, Jesus is risen, there is no reason to cry.”

But her response shows why she is crying so intensely. **“They have taken away my Lord.”** Her love for Jesus. Specifically, if you remember last week, she believes Jesus’ body has been taken and therefore has been desecrated. This is a terrible idea for anyone, much less God in the flesh.

Next, we aren’t sure how, whether the angel’s gesture to her, or she hears Jesus approaching, but she turns around and sees him. Because of the tears in her eyes or Jesus intentionally masking his appearance or just grief clouding her judgment she thinks he is the gardener of the garden.

Now Jesus asks the same question, **“Woman, why are you weeping?”** This question focuses on her. She is so lost in her feelings and emotions; she isn’t able to perceive clearly.

Jesus then asks a second question, “**Whom are you seeking?**” Do you see how the subject shifts? It goes from a focus on her and her emotions and concerns, to the person she is looking for. She assumes that he is the gardener and maybe he saw, or helped carry away Jesus’ body. She wants to take responsibility for Jesus’ body. Return it to the grave and finish any burial preparations that need to be done.

Notice what Mary is insistent upon. That she needs to find his body. She is overwhelmed with grief and is too focused on what has happened with Jesus’ dying and his body going missing to see what is in front of her.

We, like Mary, must not focus on the tragedies of this world. I have been looking at and praying through what has been released about the Southern Baptist Convention leadership over the past few weeks.

For those that don’t know. A year ago, the Southern Baptist churches gathered at the convention and voted to open an investigation into the Executive Committee, the governing board of the SBC, on how they have handled reports and questions about sexual abuse. So that report, demanded by SBC churches, came back that the Executive Committee (which rotates members) had been receiving and compiling a list of sexual predator pastors but instead of acting, they had sat on the list and tried to protect themselves or, more generously, the convention from legal liability at the expense of victims and proper dealing with churches who knowingly hire abusers.

I mourn for the men and women that have been abused by pastors or church volunteers. I mourn those leaders who have been entrusted by SBC churches have abused that trust. Yet, I have tried to be mindful as I looked at Mary, saddened by her savior being beaten and killed, shows me all the more that I should not look at this report like the world looks.

God chastises his people. He uses it to sharpen us. I hope that I am not so focused on the tragedy around me that I am not listening to how God will use this tragedy, which I rightly mourn, to bring him glory. How does sorrow lead to joy? When we have a truly godly sorrow, **2 Corinthians 7:10** says, godly sorrow leads to salvation but worldly sorrow produces death.

Mary’s sorrow of Jesus’ missing body, turns to joy very soon. To turn from seeing Jesus as just her teacher and friend to being focused on his divine task. It will take the call of God for her to see clearly. And that call will transform her tragedy into triumph.

Two – Delighted

Read John 20:16

It takes the voice of the shepherd for the sheep to recognize it, **John 10:3-4** **To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.**

Mary, he says. He knows the name of each of his sheep. This, calling her name, is similar to how God dealt with Israel in blessing her. **Isaiah 43:1** **But now thus says the LORD,**
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

Since Jesus knows Mary’s name, he is saying, (what is as countercultural as it gets), “you are mine”. I own you. Not in a domineering way but in a parent to child, creator to creature love for her. Jesus calls the name of all who have been redeemed. He created us, he formed us, so do not fear.

Mary turns with delight to cry out “**Rabboni**” which is an elevated term for Rabbi which John kindly translates for us: teacher.

To know and be known is the greatest feeling in the world. We know this intuitively from early on in life because we just want to be with our parents. Any parent that has or had a toddler. Can you get away? Nope. Will they play by themselves for long? Nope. Will they follow you to the bathroom? Yep. They smash their face and fingers underneath the door gap to try to get as close as possible. We want to know our parents and to be known by them.

Mary is delighted to be reunited with Jesus. It is just to be with him that delights her. Yet, her delight is not to be indulged as we will see. Her delight is to motivate her into deployment for Jesus’ purposes.

Three – Deployed

Read John 20:17-18

Now likely Mary’s clinging was her falling to the ground and grabbing his feet. Yet this is not the time for clinging. Jesus has a much different relationship with his disciples now than he had before.

A week earlier, a woman came and anointed his feet with oil. He had another Mary who sat at his feet to be taught while her sister Martha was busy. Who chose better? Mary did. Sitting, clinging to the feet of Jesus was praised.

Yet here with Mary Magdalene, he says not to cling. Why? He is not going away just yet. It can read a little strange but its not a hard concept to understand. Jesus will ascend in 40 days. But there are still 40 days for her to be with him.

When your father comes home from a business trip. You go to greet him at the airport and you run and jump into his arms. Can you just stay there and cling to him because he will go on another trip in a week? No, you let go, take his hand and walk to the car to go home. There will be time to cling to him, but we have to get to the car, get home, get settled first.

Mary is tasked to go to Jesus' brothers. Not his friends or his slaves as he has called them, but now his brothers.

She goes and tells them that Jesus is ascending to (notice how this is phrased), **"my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."**

Jesus is emphasizing that they now share an inheritance with Jesus. They are his brothers, they now share the Father, their God. This is Jesus' way of telling us how we are now to relate with Jesus and with God once Jesus' death and resurrection are complete.

Trusting in Christ, we don't just enjoy eternal life. We enjoy new life now with the church, relating to one another, Jesus and God himself as a family.

When Mary went, she announced **"I have seen the Lord"** yet we notice that in other accounts and based on what verse 19 says, they are staying locked indoors. They are not yet believing Mary. But not for long.

Conclusion

Mary's deployment for the mission of Jesus is going to be contrasted with Thomas, poor Doubting Thomas. That's why this is part 1. Mary sees Jesus and hears his voice and believes. It is not by sight or by touch but by his call to her.

In her tragedy her tears were not needed. The angels and Jesus both ask Mary, **Why are you weeping?**, because Jesus has come. Her tragedy has turned to triumph and her instinct is to cling to Jesus but Jesus turns her focus to the task at hand. Rally the brothers, let's get ready for his ascension. It will be the event that looms on the horizon for these 40 days. How long till he ascends? How long till the Spirit comes?

In Mary we see that a Christian must bring their thoughts and emotions captive to serve the Lord. With his questions, Jesus shifted her focus with his questions from herself to himself. We must do the same. To let our thoughts stay on earthly things is to ignore the heavenly.

Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 10:3-6**

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

It's not wrong to cry, but it is wrong to mourn when your reason for mourning has been overcome in Christ. It is not wrong to cling, but it is wrong to cling when ministry for Christ is at hand.

Too many Christians stay in a tragedy that has been redeemed by the cross. Mary's tragedy is cured by the cross very literally. Ours will be done by the spiritual healing in the truths of the gospel. Death is overcome so we do not mourn like an unbeliever. We walk in the truth that in Christ we wage war with divine power. We destroy everything brought against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ. We can be confident in the forgiveness of sins. We can be confident in the freedom of the cross.

The distinction between faithfulness in these circumstances is: Whose voice are you listening to? Are you looking on earth? Or are you listening to his voice, who called you by name, and responding to his call for the ministry you have been given? You cannot stay in your grief or your earthly focus will stunt your spiritual growth or spiritual vitality or spiritual ministry.

If we are truly Christ's sheep when he calls our name and calls us to his purpose out of our grief, we must go. **The resurrected Christ shifts our focus from earthly to heavenly joy & purpose.**

Tragedy to Triumph: Part 1

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2 Corinthians 7:10

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