

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

¹¹ but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. (NIV84)

Theme: Jesus: The Light.

How does it feel to be left in the dark? You know what I’m talking about; when it seems as if everyone knows something, except you. You are blind to the truth—you have no idea what is really going on. You are left in the dark. It’s not a particularly good feeling—to be ignorant of something; especially if it’s something really important. No

one wants to be left in the dark. But that is Mary Magdalene in our text for today

She had followed Jesus around ever since he cast seven demons out of her. She saw him perform other miracles. She heard him preach. She believed that he was the promised Messiah—the one God chose to save the world from their sins. But then Jesus was arrested. He was beaten and flogged. Soon he was sentenced to death. Nailed to a cross upon which he died. She was there at the foot of the cross. She was there to see his lifeless body placed in a tomb.

Mary was in the dark. “I thought he was the promised Messiah. I thought he was going to usher in the kingdom of God. He showed so much power—over all things, even the laws of nature. Why did he just let himself be killed? Why didn’t he do something to those who were killing him? She wasn’t sure who Jesus was. She wasn’t sure why everything happened the way it did. All she knew is one she believed in was now dead. What about her sins? Would she have to pay for them herself? If the Jews had Jesus killed, what would they do to her too? What about her eternal life?

Mary was in the dark. That is the way we all are by nature. We are in the dark when it comes to God. We don’t know who God is. We’ve never heard of his Son. We are clueless as to what Christ has done for us.

We are also in the dark in a different way. We live in the darkness of our sins. For our sins separate us from God. They make us God’s enemies. By nature we are blind as to how sinful we truly are. We think of ourselves as pretty good—sure we make mistakes, but overall we’re good people. We think that we can somehow earn our way to eternal life. That our deeds can earn God’s favor. We are blind to how dark our souls really are. We often fail to see how sin affects our souls.

But we do see the effects of sin in our everyday lives. Perhaps you are sick. Your body is slowly but surely breaking down. Loved ones have died. Others you love are soon to follow. And so the world becomes a place of darkness—a place of gloom and sadness.

Mary was in the dark that Easter morning as she and others left for Jesus’ tomb. Actually it was still dark out. As they approached the

tomb, in the first light of dawn they saw that the stone of Jesus' tomb was rolled away. Mary thought that Jesus' body was stolen. She ran to tell Peter and John, **They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!** The two disciples ran there with Mary. They saw the empty tomb and left confused. But Mary stayed behind, crying. She stooped down and peered into the tomb. Two angels were sitting on the bench where Jesus was laid. **They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."**

Mary still didn't get it. Like that early morning haze, She wasn't thinking or seeing clear. Even when she saw Jesus. She said to him, **Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.** She didn't recognize Jesus—she thought he was a gardener. Still crying, still in the dark.

Mary, he said. At that moment her eyes and heart were open. It was Jesus! He wasn't dead. He was alive. He was standing right in front of her. The lifeless body she saw placed in the tomb a few days before was now alive. Her Lord lives! He truly is the Messiah and the Savior of the world.

Mary was so excited that she grasped Jesus, and held on to him. But Jesus said to her, **Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'** Through Christ's resurrection we are now children of God. For Jesus, true God, calls us his brothers and sisters. We have the same Father. Sinners, now God's children. Pure and innocent in his eyes. In a matter of 40 days Jesus would ascend up to heaven and would take his spot on the throne of God. Just as our Savior ascended into heaven we too will ascend into heaven. Through his resurrection we will live with him forever.

And so we are brought out of darkness and into his wonderful light. Jesus' resurrection shines light on our darkened souls. We are no longer in the dark. We have seen the Savior. We know that through his death our sins have been atoned for. That our darkened souls have been covered with the bright-white robe of Christ's righteousness. We have seen the way to salvation. Through faith we know that it is

through Christ alone. It is through his death and resurrection alone that our sins are removed and we have the gift of eternal life. We have clearly seen the light. And it is Christ. As Jesus says about himself in John 8 **I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life** We have seen the light, Christ—the way to eternal life. And his life shines light on our death. And those of our loved ones. For death does not have to be looked at with gloom, but joy. For it is the beginning of eternal life.

Mary saw the light of forgiveness and eternal life in the resurrection Jesus. She was no longer in the dark. And she couldn't hold back her excitement. She ran back to the disciples and told them about everything that had happened. And they too were in the dark for awhile. Until that Easter night Jesus himself appeared to them. They then knew and believed. No longer filled with darkness but with inexpressible joy.

There are still many who are in the dark. They are living in the darkness of unbelief. You probably know a good number of them. Do what Mary did. For we too have seen the light. We too are filled with awe and excitement in Jesus' resurrection. Go, spread his Word. Tell others of free forgiveness and eternal life. For you were once in darkness, but now have seen the light. Spread the Word, so Jesus may shine his light on their darkened souls and bring them to everlasting life. Amen.