

## "Who Are You Looking For?"

"Woman, " he said, "why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"  
John 20:15

"Who are you looking for?' This was the question our risen Savior asked of Mary Magdalene, and it's an important one. If today you are looking for a dead Jesus, you are looking for a Christ who did not keep his promises and fulfill his prophecy. Then, of course, you have no Savior, no solution to your sufferings, no antidote for the hour of your own death, and no consolation as you face eternity. Mary Magdalene, as our Lord Jesus found her, was to be pitied. But he met her need. He alone could.

Sometime before this account, Jesus had also met another need of Mary's when he drove out seven devils that had possessed her. From that time on, she and many other women had accompanied him and his apostles on many of their preaching tours. It was an opportunity for them to hear his Word and to be strengthened in their faith in him as the Son of God, the promised Messiah. Now, however, Mary's faith had been shattered - shattered because she had forgotten the promise.

And she wasn't the only one. When Jesus had previously spoken to his disciples about his suffering, dying, and rising again, Peter had even rebuked him. Even though God through the Old Testament prophets had clearly foretold the suffering, death, and resurrection of his Messiah, those who walked and talked with the living Christ simply couldn't conceive of him dying and, after he had died, of him rising from the dead.

Together with the other women, Mary Magdalene had come to finish embalming the dead body of Jesus on Easter Sunday - to perform this last labor of love for him .... to give him this final honor. But believing him dead was not honoring him or his Word, for he had risen. It was our Lord himself who had to bring Mary to the conviction that he had indeed risen from the dead. He did this by simply speaking her name - the Man whom she thought did not know knew her! Her eyes were suddenly opened, and joy filled her heart. It didn't take her long to seek out the disciples and share the marvelous news with them.

That's the last time we meet Mary Magdalene in the Scriptures - a woman whose heart is filled with the glory of the Savior's resurrection from the dead. And that's by far the best eulogy that can be written for any person's life, isn't it! She or he knew Jesus as their living Savior and rejoiced in the resurrection victory he has won for them. What a comforting thought when it comes to our loved ones who have died trusting in Jesus as their Savior. What a comforting thing for someone to say about us after we have died.

It isn't often that people write their own obituaries, but recently a pastor I know received an obituary written by one of his members that he wanted read at his funeral service. Addressing those who were present, the man said:

"Virtually everyone here today would probably agree that Jesus died for our sins. But all too many of us are prone to forget, or at least give due recognition to, some of his greatest suffering. He took upon his shoulders, as the vast part of that suffering, all the guilt of my sins, your sins, and the sins of all people past, present, and future. Think of that for a moment. ...

"Now, my course is run. My end as a mortal human being is here. But I'm so thankful to my blessed Lord for keeping me in the faith, strengthening that faith, and helping me to accept God's will ... .It has been said that tears and various expressions of grief are natural when God has called one of us home. But are not happiness and joy even more appropriate? If you love me - really love me - try stopping the tears now and smile for what I have entered into, rather than cry for what I have left behind."

That's really pretty neat, isn't it? And besides that, it's true. I think Mary Magdalene might have put it the same way for the friends who attended her funeral. And so can all of us who by faith see Jesus as the One who says of himself, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die, " (John 11 :25).

HAPPY EASTER!

Blessed by the love of Jesus,  
Pastor Terry