

I HAVE SEEN THE LORD

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one 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 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" 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 Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for 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 that he had said these things to her.

Introduction

1. When we believe something to be true we are not easily persuaded to change our minds. That's good when what we believe is the truth. It's not good when what we believe is not the truth. And when what we believe is about God and our relationship to Him, the matter is pretty much set in stone – whether true or not!
2. Last week we talked briefly about Mary Magdalene at the tomb. When she arrived, the tomb was open and empty. She **assumed** Jesus was still dead and someone had taken His body away, but where, she didn't know. She ran to tell Peter and John what she saw and what she was thinking. After hearing her, they ran to the tomb to check it out. They saw what she saw and they also saw the grave cloths. Peter went home wondering what was going on. John went home, believing that Jesus had risen. Mary continued to assume someone stole Jesus' body. That's where we stopped last week.
3. Mary returned to the tomb, at least the second and maybe the third time that morning, probably right after John and Peter had left to return home. When she arrived this time, she was alone – or at least that's what she thought! That's where we pick up the narrative today. Mary continued to see everything through her

earlier assumptions that Jesus remained dead, that someone had taken His body and carried it away.

4. This passage holds some challenging issues for us, which we will get to in due time. But for now, listen to the **text** and let's follow what happened.
5. Here is where I plan to go with this and what I want you to see. **First**, if we begin with a **set of assumptions** of what we believe to be true, everything we see and every experience we have goes through that grid. According to the text we just read, Mary was exposed to two angels and Jesus but that did not immediately change her assumptions about Jesus' death and missing body. **Second**, when Jesus **called her by name, everything changed**. I see that as significant – not just for her, but also for us. And **third**, following her acknowledgement of His resurrection, she did what Jesus told her to do, **announcing His resurrection and declaring His instructions**. That too is applicable to us.
6. Kids, today we are talking about things we sometimes miss when we are preoccupied with something else. Mary believed that Jesus was dead and the tomb was empty. When she got there the tomb wasn't empty. Who was in the tomb (**2 angels**)? What was Mary doing when she looked into the tomb (**weeping**)? Jesus was standing outside the tomb behind Mary. Who did she think He was (**the gardener**)? What word made her realize that he was Jesus (**Mary**)? What was Mary's testimony to the disciples (**I have seen the Lord**)?

I. BOUND BY ASSUMPTIONS

- A. Assumptions and the presence of angels (This helps us see how powerful those assumptions can be).
 1. Mary was at the cross when Jesus was crucified. She saw where He was laid when He was buried. This was at least the second time she came to the tomb that Sunday morning. She loved Jesus. He had delivered her from demons. She had listened to Him and she believed in Him. But now He was dead and she had not stopped crying since His death. So, we are told in verse 11...
 2. **"Mary stood weeping outside the tomb."** The word for "weeping" is the same to describe the paid mourners at the funeral for Lazarus. While she is weeping she stoops and looks in the tomb. There are two angels in the tomb – angels! She sees them and they talk to her and she talks to them. When they asked

her, **“Why are you weeping?”**, it was not to get information. It was a mild rebuke. Behind their question was the fact that no weeping was necessary because Jesus was not dead! He was alive. But she didn't know it yet!

3. Do you find any of this strange? She looks in and sees two angels – one on either end of the stone table/shelf – and they speak to her and she doesn't question their identity or even what they are doing in Jesus' tomb. Perhaps she didn't know they were angels. After all, angels appeared throughout Scripture as men. Nevertheless we hear her assumptions loud and clear – “They have taken away (note) **my** Lord's body and I do not know where they have laid him.” That's the same lament she has been singing since she discovered the empty tomb.
4. Mary was looking for an answer to what she believed to be the only question that mattered and even two angels from heaven would not get her off track! Her assumptions were wrong, but it didn't matter. These assumptions so controlled her that she was unable to see what was right in front of her! Angels! But there is more!

B. Assumptions and the presence of Jesus

1. For some reason she turned around. One commentator said he believed one of the angels motioned for her to do so. Maybe Jesus made a bit of a noise and she turned to look. Maybe she just sensed someone behind her. Jesus asked the same question as the angel – **“Woman, why are you weeping?”** And then He asked her, **“Whom are you seeking?”**
2. Mary's assumptions controlled her reasoning and her conversation. Jesus is dead. His body is gone. Perhaps this man who just asked the question is the gardener and perhaps he's the one who removed the body. With no real thought of how she could actually do it, she was ready to take the body (a dead man's body that had been wrapped with 75 pounds of spices) and carry it to a place where she could properly bury it. **“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”**
3. Obviously, Mary did not recognize Jesus. Apparently most who the first time saw Him resurrected did not recognize Him. Maybe there was some difference in appearance in His glorified body or maybe people were just kept from recognizing

Him until He made Himself known. Maybe it was combination of Mary's assumption that Jesus was dead and her distraught condition over the missing body, that she failed to recognize Jesus speaking to her.

4. My point here is that as long as we keep our faulty assumptions about God and about His plan and how we might intersect with that plan, we will never see Him for who He really is! No experience, including the appearance of angels, or even the Lord Himself, will make things any clearer. Our faulty assumptions will hide the truth from us. But something happened to shatter those assumptions and cause her to see.

II. FREED FROM ASSUMPTIONS BY IDENTIFICATION

A. Jesus speaks her name!

1. One word and everything changed – **“Mary.”** Mary didn't recognize Jesus. To be called by name by a stranger would prompt a response – if not spoken at least thoughtfully considered – “How do you know who I am?” But that is not what this is.
2. As soon as Mary heard Jesus speak her name, she knew it was Jesus! How did she know?
3. I don't want to read something into the text that's not here. But I think there is more than just Jesus saying her name and Mary realizing that it is Jesus. At the very least I think we have been given an illustration of a spiritual transaction. Whatever we might believe about Jesus, when He calls our name, we recognize who He is. Let's turn back to John 10 for a minute. Verse 3 – **“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”** Verse 27 – **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me.”**
4. Isn't that great? Isn't that incredible? I was stumbling around, overwhelmed by life's disappointments, believing a boatload of assumptions about myself and God and life... And then He called. He called my name. And when He called I knew it was Jesus. The assumptions fell away. The vision became clear. It's Jesus – the Good Shepherd, the one who gave His life for His sheep. Because He called, I now belong to Him! In that moment, everything changed.

5. Mary was overwhelmed. She responded, **“Rabboni!”** Teacher! And likely she fell at His feet and hung on to Him. She could not keep herself from such expressions of love and worship! But Jesus speaks. What do His words mean?

B. Jesus calms her old fears and her new fears

1. A good deal of ink has been applied to paper to try to explain, **“Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.”** Some has assumed Jesus in His glorified body was not to be touched for some unknown reason – but if that’s the case, why, before He ascended to the Father, did He welcome the disciples that night and a week later, Thomas, to touch the crucifixion scars on His body?
2. Others have assumed that Mary’s clinging was an awkward attempt to hang on to Jesus and never let Him go, but He was making the case that He would soon ascend to the Father. The relationship she had with Him would be from now on different. It would be spiritual. She needed to understand that. That’s more probable than the first explanation. But I think a third possibility is a simpler and better explanation of Jesus’ words.
3. Mary was hanging on, perhaps assuming that Jesus was ready to ascend to the Father and she would never see Him again. But He is telling her that she did not need to cling to Him. He had not yet ascended. True, He was going to, but not yet. One commentator paraphrases it this way: **“Stop holding on to me. I have not yet ascended to my Father, so you do not have to hang on to me as if I were about to disappear permanently. This is a time for joy and sharing good news, not for clutching me as if I were some jealously guarded private dream-come-true. Stop clinging to me, but go and tell my disciples that I am in the process of ascending to my Father and your Father”** (Carson, p. 644).

III. DIRECTED BY VISION

A. Tell of my resurrection

1. Though this is not explicit in the text, it certainly is implied. And as soon as Mary reached the disciples, she declared, **“I have seen the Lord!”**
2. It is interesting that Mary was the first to see the risen Lord. As far as I can tell, Jesus only appeared to believers. He could have gone on an evangelism tour,

touting His experience of resurrection and highlighting His resurrection body – but He didn't. He didn't come to wow people. He came to save them. He did appear to His disciples on more than one occasion, true – but Mary was first. The message to Mary and to the disciples and to us is tell the truth about His death and resurrection and what that means in terms of salvation.

B. Tell of the changed relationship (two observations)

1. Notice, “Go to **my brothers...**” Did that surprise you? This describes a relationship that seems to have changed, that is more intimate than had been expressed previously. Jesus had referred to His followers as **disciples** and **servants** and in John 15, even **friends**, but never brothers, until now. This speaks of the shared privileges that we have in Christ. Note the following Biblical commentary:

a. Romans 8:15-16 - ***15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,***

b. Hebrews 2:11-12 (citing Psalm 22:22) - ***11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” “Go to my brothers...”***

2. Notice, “I am ascending to **my** Father and **your** Father, to **my** God and **your** God.” Lest we take that brother familiarity too far, we are reminded that there is a separation, a distance between Jesus and His followers. **Brothers** announce that we share in the uniqueness of His Son-ship but there must always be a **difference** between the Lord Jesus and us – thus, **“My Father and your Father and My God and your God.”** Nevertheless, this is incredible that we might be spoken of and compared in the same sentence!

Conclusion

1. Mary did as she was told, not only declaring that she had seen Him, but also telling the disciples what He had told her to convey to them.

2. How did they respond to her message? We are not told here. However, according to Luke 24:9-11 it was not exactly welcomed news - **these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.**
3. How sad, but they soon would believe. Remember only a few hours earlier Mary didn't believe either! But God is able to shatter assumptions and blow away any barriers to faith. When He calls our name, we will hear and it changes everything! "So, (insert your name) go and tell..." there are our marching orders from Jesus!
4. What assumptions are we carrying concerning Jesus, concerning Christianity, even concerning our own relationship with Jesus, that are clouding our understanding of Jesus and what He desires from us?
5. Maybe some of you are carrying assumptions that are far removed from the Gospel. O may it be that God will speak your name today and call you to trust in Him!