

John 20:1-18

Easter

April 4, 2010

If Mary Magdalene had known what you know, how different things would have been. If she had known then what you know now, she would have gathered all her friends before the first hint of the new day was intruding into the darkness. They would have skipped and danced all the way to the tomb. Instead of spices to cover the stench of death, in their hands would be bread and wine – some fish to share – food for a picnic celebration with Jesus.

But on that morning Mary carried the burden of grief. She had witnessed the suffering and death of her Lord. She had heard him put his mother into the care of the disciple, heard Jesus cry, I thirst, heard Jesus declare, It is finished. She had witnessed the moment when he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

All that was left was sorrow.

Early – while it was still dark – she went to the tomb. When she arrived she saw that the stone had been removed.

She ran to Peter – They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.

She should have been rejoicing – but she did not yet see with new eyes of faith. She still lived in the world where dead is dead. So she returned to the tomb weeping.

As she wept she bent over to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying. “Woman, Why are you weeping?” they asked.

Mary told them why, “They have taken the Lord and I do not know where they have laid him.”

Sometimes what people suffer is so great that it is hard to break through to them. That is how it was for Mary. Nothing mattered any more. Jesus was dead - she wanted to cling to his lifeless body.

But now even his body had been taken.

Mary turned and saw Jesus standing but in her sorrow she did not recognize him. “Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” he asked. Thinking he was the gardener Mary asked, “Sir, if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

Suddenly the sun was shining. In a moment she would run to tell Peter and the disciples, “I have seen the Lord.” Her tears were tears of joy and relief.

But you knew all of that already. You know what Mary did not know early that morning – what would have made all the difference for her. Jesus is alive – God raised him from the dead – death could not hold the only Son of God.

This day we sing our Alleluias – Praise the Lord. We sing of the forgiveness and the life and the salvation Jesus has won. Because we know.

But I wonder – do we really know? Will a day come when you will look back on your life and say, “If I had only known then what I know now.” Will you look back on fears and anxieties and declare: If I had only known how this was all going to turn out I would have lived so differently. I was so worried about me and about those I loved. I had so little faith in Jesus. If I had known the peace and the joy and the celebration that Jesus had waiting for me everything would have been different. I could have been reckless in loving. I could have opened my arms to embrace so many people but I had no idea that Jesus’ victory was really mine. I could have stopped worrying how I was doing, I could have stopped feeling judged, stopped judging myself, stopped being so judgmental of others. If I had only known and believed that Jesus would be saving those folks I went to work with and came to church to pray with and even those folks I ignored as I rushed by them – if I had only known I would have taken more time for them, more time for love.

You do know how everything is going to turn out. Through Jesus you will be saved, forgiven, made new, raised from every death, even that final one. So live by the new world of Jesus resurrection and not the old world

of dying and keeping track of sins. Live in the newness of the new life Christ has won for you, now, today, and forever.