

John 20:1-18

Easter

April 23, 2000

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 together before even the smallest glow was visible in the east. Had she known what you know now, she would have skipped and danced all the way to the tomb. Instead of spices they would have brought bread and wine – some fish to share – a picnic feast with Jesus.

But on that morning Mary knew only grief. She had been at the cross to witness the suffering and death of her Lord. *Worshipping - one we love deeply - worked - in pain - being regarded as of course.* She had heard him put his mother in the care of the disciple, heard him cry, I thirst, heard him declare, It is finished. She had witnessed the moment when he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Now all that was left was her sorrow.

Early – while it was still dark – she went to the tomb where Jesus was buried. But when she arrived 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 could only see with the old eyes of a 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 once more spoke the only thing she was certain of that morning – They have taken the Lord and I do not know where they have laid him.

Sometimes what people suffer is so great that even if an angel should appear right before their eyes, it would not matter. That is how it was for Mary. Nothing mattered any more. Jesus was dead. All that she had to cling to was his lifeless body.

Now even his body had been taken.

Mary turned and saw Jesus standing but in her sorrow she did not even 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 be running to tell Peter and the disciples, I have seen the Lord. Her tears were tears of joy.

But you knew all of that already. Many of you know this story by heart. 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 during these days 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 those I loved. I had so little faith in Jesus and his victory over every enemy. If I had known the peace and the joy and the celebration that Jesus had waiting for me it would have changed everything for me. 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 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 the time for them.

You do know how everything is going to turn out. Through ~~Jesus~~ you will be saved, forgiven, made new,
raised from the dead, ^{through him,} ~~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.