

Easter Sunrise C, 2010

Text: John 20:1-18

Title: Like Mary

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Like Mary, you have come early on the first day of the week, looking for Jesus. This is the place where you saw Him last. This is the place where you left Him on Friday. This is the place where you expect to find Jesus, just like Mary.

Like Mary, you came in darkness – the darkness of sin, doubt, and death.

Friday was a dark day, a day of death and mourning.

Jesus' friends were crushed by the darkness of doubt, as they questioned whether Jesus was really the One. How could the Messiah die? How could He be forsaken by God? Their minds were shrouded in darkness.

Like Mary, you have been crying. Things have not gone the way that you expected them to go. You have been disappointed by many things in your life. You have seen your share of pain, tragedy and death. Every time things seem to be going well and you have your life on track, something new comes and knocks you back down.

Before Mary met Jesus, her life was filled by demons. But Jesus had gotten rid of her demons, and loved her like no one else ever had. She trusted in Him. She believed in Him. But now He had died, and Mary couldn't even find His body. Everything seemed to be going wrong for Mary, and so she stood weeping outside the tomb.

Whether it's pain and death, whether it's loneliness and disappointment, whether it's been a job lost or a prolonged illness, or even just frustration with a world gone wrong, there have been time when you have been brought to tears, just like Mary.

Like Mary, Jesus has come to you this day. You may not have recognized Him.

You may have been looking for someone or something else. He comes to you in hidden ways. Not in the big and spectacular, but in the ordinary. Not as God Almighty, but as a gardener. In a splash of water and a name, in a voice, in a book, in bread and wine. The Risen Lord still comes to you in subtle, hidden ways.

Like Mary, Jesus has called you by name. Just as Jesus spoke Mary's name in the garden, this morning He has spoken Mary's name at the font, and made this place the garden of His resurrection. In baptism God calls you by Name and makes you His own. In baptism, God writes your name in the book of Life. You are personally known to Him, and loved by Him, just like Mary.

Like Mary, Jesus has turned your sorrow joy. The good news of the resurrection is the answer to all of your tears and mourning. What is that makes you sad?

If you have been mourning over your sin, rejoice and be glad, your sins are forgiven. Jesus is risen, victorious over sin. Heaven is yours because of Easter.

If you have been mourning over pain and sickness, rejoice and be glad, you will have a new body in the resurrection of the dead. Jesus Christ will renew and recreate your body, making it immortal and imperishable. You will be changed to be like Him.

If you have been mourning over death, because you have lost someone you love, rejoice and be glad. Jesus' resurrection means that we will all be raised with Him. In your baptism you have been joined with Jesus Christ. What goes for Him now goes for you. Just as Jesus now lives and will never die, so will you.

If you have been mourning because of loneliness and rejection, rejoice and be glad, for Jesus is with you and will never leave you. Death cannot hold Him, and nothing can separate you from His love.

Like Mary, you have tried to cling to your Jesus. She wanted to hold and have Him all for her own. But Jesus is for more than just you. He was about to ascend to His Father's right hand. While Jesus was still on this earth, He was limited to one place, one location.

The incarnation put Jesus in a specific body- He was in the manger, He was on the cross, He was there in the garden with Mary.

After the ascension, Jesus is now at God's right hand, active and present wherever God is at work. This means that Jesus is here today, but He's also down the street at Zion and across town at St. Paul's and wherever people are gathered in His Name to receive His gifts.

We can't hold on to Jesus and keep Him all for ourselves, He's got many more folks to meet with.

Like Mary, you have been sent to announce to the others, "I have seen the Lord." Her message was not long and complicated. She didn't go into lengthy explanations about how or why Jesus' was raised. She simply told them what she had experienced, "I have seen the Lord," and then she told them what Jesus had told her.

It's the same for you. You are sent from this place today with simple message, "I have seen the Lord." Today you have been in Jesus' presence. You have seen Him at work and listened to His voice. As you go into the world to meet folks who are still in mourning, still filled with pain and grief, still in the darkness of sin and doubt, the Lord will use you to give them the same comfort that you have received here today.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!