

ALIVE: EASTER 2017

April 16, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

As we celebrate Resurrection Sunday, we begin to realize that Jesus can step into any area of our life and bring His resurrection life and power. It's really about the entrance of His life into the broken parts of our lives.

This day became the beginning point (this very moment) for a few and then for many who have anchored their life on believing this truth. We begin to see that this isn't some empty religious set of rules but people for 2000 years who have believed the resurrection as truth. This truth changed their lives to the point of losing everything including their lives.

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

"So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen." John 20:1-7

Even though Jesus had repeatedly told them He would die and then be raised on the third day, something stopped this possibility from even entering their thinking. You would think that it might at least come across their minds as an option. But the first one to the tomb, Mary, concluded that someone had taken His body.

Is it really any different for us in our culture, many people's worldview today says "dead people don't come back to life". For those in the first century and for us today we wonder "It must be a metaphor", so what would it take to believe? Maybe something very different, overwhelming and incredible to crush this worldview. What has to happen to change your worldview?

Initially for Mary, John and Peter they **"saw"**:

'saw' (theoreo) = reasoning, to observe intently, looking for an explanation.

There is a misconception that believers are void of rational thought. The very definition of "theoreo", ("saw") would argue against that. Yes, faith comes into play, but look at what we're reading and look at John's response in verse 8:

"Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed."

'believed' (pisteuo) = trust in, commit yourself to, have relationship with.

These first eye witnesses began to talk about it, began to write about it. Even through non-biblical sources we would see believers throughout the known world.

Some even today believe that resurrection is a hoax. The reality is that it takes 60 to 80 years to believe a myth, usually after the original people begin to die off. But 30 years later and 1500 miles away from Jerusalem the Emperor Nero would blame believers for burning Rome and began a severe persecution of many believers who were living in and near Rome.

If you think about it, the most unlikely believer in Jesus would be His family and especially His brother, James. So what would it take to convince your siblings that you were the Messiah, the Creator of the Universe? James would come to put his faith in Jesus to the point of dying a grizzly death for his Savior and Lord.

The Gospel stands or falls on the resurrection. But the question, not if it is "helpful", rather if it's "true" it will change you!

The Resurrection – Fact AND Impact

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her."

Mary was the first one to the tomb, when she saw it was empty, she concluded that someone took Jesus body. She didn't recognize Jesus, until he called her by name...Mary.

"After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means." (Luke 8:1-3)

"Magdalene" was not Mary's last name, that was where she was from. In this culture, a woman was identified by being with a man. She was a tormented person by her culture and by demonic spirits. She met Jesus, who was different from any man, any person she had ever met. He set her free and she would become part of His group, His family...He had become her everything, now He was dead and so were her hopes. But Jesus shows up in the middle of her pain and loss and will ask her three questions.

1. WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

He is not stating the obvious, He is looking and probing deeper.

"We stand around trying to rearrange death and all the while, Jesus is standing nearby, wanting to give us life"

This quote fit Mary so well, she was trying to dignify death, but Jesus wanted to give her life. The wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, realized at the end of his life that he had just rearranged death:

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. 11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11)

"Why is it so hard to face suffering? Why is it so hard to face disability and disease? Why is it so hard to do the right thing if you know it's going to cost you money, reputation, maybe even your life? It's so hard because we think (and act) as though this broken world is the only world we are ever going to have. It's easy to feel as if this money is the only wealth we'll ever have. But if Jesus is risen, if He is the resurrection and the life, then your future is so much more beautiful, and so much more certain, than that." Tim Keller

2. WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

"We don't see Him for who He is; we easily mistake Him for someone He is not"

Everyone's looking for something, Mary didn't recognize Jesus. I wonder how many times we don't recognize Jesus for who He really is.

Many people talk about "finding Jesus", He is not lost we are lost. He asks us also "what are you looking for"?

3. WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

"There is a correlation between whom you listen to and the direction your life will take"

"...His sheep follow him because they know his voice." (John 10:4)

Jesus called Mary's name and her eyes were opened. Hear Him call you by name, He wants you to see and know Him and that can only happen as He reveals Himself.

Many of us enjoyed the books written by C.S. Lewis. In the final book in the Narnia series the four young kids die in a train crash and Lewis ends by speaking these insightful words:

"And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before." (C.S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle)

On the flipside a 19th century French Philosopher once said life was; "a nightmare between two nothings. But Jesus offers us as C.S. Lewis noted a new chapter that goes on forever and is better than the first.

"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:9-10 NIV)

In the first garden encounter Eve listened to the deceiver, fast forward to another garden encounter and Mary hears the voice of Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. First, when we think about Easter and his glorious and powerful resurrection, what are some thoughts that come to your mind?
2. For over 2000 years' millions have believed in the truth of the resurrection. We know that the Gospel stands and falls with this one truth, when did you come to believe in the power of his resurrection?
3. As you read or look over John 20:1-7, discuss the importance of these two words "saw" and "believe". (See pages 1 & 2)
4. As you read verses 11-18 (on page 3) and see the interaction between Jesus and Mary what are some things that stick out to you?
5. Please discuss the three questions Jesus asked Mary:
 - "Why are you crying"?
 - "What are you looking for"?
 - "Who are you listening to"?
6. Lastly, looking at the C.S. Lewis quote on pages 5 and 6, how does this exert speak to you about your eternal future?