

I Have Seen The Lord

John 20:11-18

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In our world there is fear and doubt, sorrow and grief. You can live any place on the planet and it's the same. You might be a millionaire, or scraping by day to day, or someplace in between. It's the same for everyone: fear and doubt, sorrow and grief.

As we wake up every morning there is a problem someplace, somewhere for someone. Maybe the problem is money or health. It could be family, neighbors, or an enemy. People are alcoholics, addicts, abusers, and victims. There are negative messages and violence everywhere that we look. Love doesn't last, but insults do. People work hard but it doesn't change anything. Others are careless, lazy, and inconsiderate. Then some are just greedy.

A miracle happened that changed the world. Life was altered by the work of one individual. History was changed forever. All that was needed was faith. Simple trust that this one individual could save every person from condemnation, punishment, and eternal separation from God. Well in this absurd world in which we live bunny rabbits, eggs, and candy have replaced the miracle of resurrection and salvation.

John 20:11–18 (ESV) Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 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.” Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 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.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). 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.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

After talking with Jesus, Mary told the disciples He had risen from the dead. Truly, this is a miracle or grave robbery. Jesus is either alive or He is dead. Mary is a face to face witness that Jesus is alive.

Mary first reported to the disciples that the body of Jesus was missing. After preparing spices and ointments to anoint Jesus' body, Mary and several other women went to the place where Jesus was buried. On the way they talked among themselves concerning who would roll the stone away from the tomb. But when they arrived the stone had been moved. That's when she went to report what she had seen. Peter and John ran to the tomb, both looked in and saw that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. Scripture says they went home, which meant they went back to the upper room where they were hiding.

Mary and the other disciples appear to believe the religious leaders wanted to silence Jesus, His followers, and this movement. What better way for them to do this than to kill Him, then take His body, and put an end to this craziness.

Grief and sorrow are part of our lives, and that was true for Mary. Jesus had cast out of her seven demons that tormented her life. She loved Jesus for saving her from the torture. She loved Jesus for delivering her from the pain and suffering. She loved Jesus for redeeming her to a new life. She loved Jesus with a great compassion to follow Him and serve Him. Mary's love was seen in her devotion, loyalty, and protection. It is no wonder that she was weeping.

Uncertain about what to do and convinced that Jesus' body had been stolen, Mary stayed at the tomb. She was drowning in her own tears and sorrow. She could not function. That was when two messengers from Jesus appeared to her. They didn't offer words of comfort, hug her, or offer a tissue.

They asked her a pointed and direct question. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Her answer didn't help her or them. Without recognizing Him, Jesus was there. They spoke to one another. Then by calling her name, she realized it was Jesus. He was alive. He had risen from the dead. She grabbed Him and held onto Him so as to never lose Him again.

Jesus knowing her need and His mission He sent her away with a message. Mary needed to tell the disciples what had happened. In the span of a very short time Mary ran from the tomb and back into the city twice. The second time Mary reported that Jesus is alive and that He would be ascending to His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

Mary is a face to face witness that Jesus is alive. I believe that scripture makes it clear that she touched Jesus. She was an utterly and completely reliable as a witness. There is nothing that would suggest she is lying.

*John 20:18 (NLT) Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" **We don't see Jesus even when He's right in front of us.*** We're blinded by the situation, our agenda, and our emotions.

When Grandpa Bud died there was great sadness in our family. He had a massive heart attack, while eating his favorite evening snack-popcorn. Grandpa Bud swore a lot. He didn't like people and he would tell them. He didn't like people because of the color of their skin. He made threats about killing people who came on His property.

We were sad because he was dead, but also because there were no signs that he ever gave his life to Jesus. We were sad because we were afraid he was in hell. Grandma Mary came to live with us for awhile. She was emotionally very frail, saddened that she would never see him again. She wept for days. She was teary eyed for weeks. She was never able to let Him go.

Our emotions blind us. We can't see beyond our feelings. We can't always see Jesus. Sometimes we don't want to see Jesus because of the weight of our grief. We ask questions that are irrelevant. Jesus has risen from the dead. Who moved the stone? Is it relevant? Were there two angels or one? Why weren't they in the tomb when Mary first arrived? Why did Jesus fold up the cloth that covered His face? Did all the women go get Peter and John or just Mary? When did the women leave? Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus at first?

It doesn't matter. Not one of those questions is important. All of them sidetrack us from the point. Jesus rose from the dead. Too often we want to know why and how come. We think we know the right answers. We believe that we have the right to an answer for every question we ask. Jesus says believe.

We don't believe until we see. Now is that because of our emotions? Yes, but only partly. We don't believe because we have an agenda. We have a plan that we made up and we're following. We have to be in control. We have to have our way.

Peter, one of Jesus' closest followers had to have it his way. When they came to arrest Jesus three days earlier, he chopped off a guy's ear. Jesus healed the man. Then when people asked Peter if he knew Jesus, Peter denied it three times. Peter he could see Jesus right in front of him on all those occasions.

Those are big things, right? But what's our agenda that keeps us from seeing Jesus? He is right in front of you, but there is some selfish thing you want. Jesus says believe.

John 20:18 (NLT) Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" **There are words and actions within us that somebody needs to hear.** Jesus has walked us through our sorrow and grief. When my dad died I was angry for years. I wasn't angry with God, I was angry with my dad. He knew Jesus, but he smoked like a chimney and died from lung cancer. Through those angry years Jesus was walking with me. My grief and my sorrow were transfixed on my anger. Jesus never left me. Jesus helped me understand that whatever my emotions, He was there.

In the midst of your crisis, whatever it might be, Jesus is walking with you. He walks along side those who are mad, sad, bad, and glad. He allows the crises in our lives so that we can trust Him. This isn't for His entertainment, but for His glory. Once our crisis ends with our gratitude and faith, we have a story to tell. That story is how Jesus walked us through the crisis.

Mary was not only facing the crisis of death, she was facing the crisis of value and worth. Jesus gave her hope. He also gave her a new life. She had a purpose and a reason – following and helping Jesus. But that was gone. Jesus had died and then His body was gone.

The question wasn't, where was His body, or who took His body, or what will I do without Him? The question was, do you trust Jesus, do you believe? When we answer yes I trust Jesus, yes I believe, then you have a story to tell. Doubt and fear no longer control our lives.

Mary had lots of doubts and lots of fear. I can't blame her. I would have been suspicious about everything and spiraling into a panic attack. Trusting Jesus makes the doubts look small and fears seem unimportant. They no longer have control over me. I don't need to let them push me away from Jesus. I can stand firm. Jesus is alive. I have a story to tell.

Jesus healed me of my fears. He took away my anxiety. He is with me. I trust Him. When I don't trust Him, He reminds me to call His name. Jesus has provided for my needs. When the cupboards were nearly bare, and the money was gone, Jesus put people in our lives with a car full of food. When cancer and arthritis hit Lonie's body, Jesus has provided hope and healing. When enemies came against me, Jesus provide a safe place. When my strength was gone, Jesus kept pushing me forward. When uncertainty covered my path, Jesus showed me the way.

Jesus is alive and I have a story to tell. You have a story to tell.

Here's something you could do: Believe that Jesus is alive and tell somebody. You may not go out to eat today, but the restaurants will be packed. The workers will face a lot of pressure. Servers in restaurants and fast food joints need Jesus. So, before you enter a restaurant ask Jesus to speak to and through you.

Nurses and healthcare workers are working 24/7, right? Regardless of the day of the week or the hour of the day someone in healthcare is working. They need Jesus. They need the power to carry on hour after hour. They need His power to heal. Pray for these men and women. When you go to their place of business ask Jesus to speak to and through you.

Cashiers and stockers, butchers and chefs need Jesus. When you're at the grocery do the employees get in your way? Do you want them to get out of your way? Each one of these individuals needs Jesus. They need Jesus to forgive their sins just like everyone else. On your way to the grocery pray for them.

EMTs, fire-fighters, soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and cops need Jesus. Come on, these people risk their lives. The day they go to work could be the day they don't come home. They are willing to do a job that most of us don't want to do, can't do, and are afraid to do. They need our prayers. They need Jesus to protect them. They need Jesus to save them.

Politicians and government workers need Jesus. Before every election we're bombarded with information about them. If you're like me, we get tired of hearing about them. Everyday they are working. What they need is the wisdom and knowledge that can only come from Jesus. They need Jesus. If they don't know Jesus, they won't know what is right and wrong. Pray for their salvation.

Teachers, students, and parents need Jesus. There is about seven weeks of school left. The students know this. They are eager to be outside, to be finished. Every person associated with the school systems needs Jesus. They need to know His love. They need to experience His power. They need His salvation. When you see a school bus pray. When you go past a school building, regardless of the season, pray. They need Jesus. You name the person, and they need Jesus. When you pray for people to know Jesus there will be an answer. Jesus will give you an opportunity. Trust Jesus.

Jesus is the only god who is alive. He gave His life to take away your sins. He will always walk with us. His promises are always true. He loves you and has forgiven your sin. You need Jesus. He is one word away – Jesus.

You may have never called Him. You may have never trusted Him to save you. You may have never believed He was calling you. You can be forgiven. You can have eternal life in heaven. You can have a new life now. Without Jesus we will face the punishment for our sins. Deep inside of us we think we can live without Jesus. We go our own way. We act selfishly. We sin against Jesus.

Jesus decided that His love for you was greater than our unfaithfulness. Out of His love for you He became your sin, died on that cross as your sin, and rose from the dead having cast your sin away, and defeated death. Jesus says believe. Call His name, ask Him into your life, acknowledge your sin, and proclaim your love for Him.