

Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 20:11-18

11 But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him."

14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. 15 "Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it that you're seeking?"

Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've put him, and I will take him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"—which means "Teacher."

17 "Don't cling to me," Jesus told her, "since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what he had said to her.

I. Jesus' Resurrection Changed Mary's Relationships

A. From being a devoted follower

B. From her typical grief

1. Making assumptions about Jesus' body – she was rational

a. No way that a bodily resurrection was possible

b. If they did believe that Jesus would rise from the dead they would have all been waiting at the tomb.

2. Not expecting Jesus to be resurrected

- “Mary would have heard Jesus’ prediction of his resurrection as often as anyone else. Why, when she sees the empty tomb, doesn’t she even say to herself, “Oh! He said he would rise! Could it possibly be?” No. That doesn’t even occur to her.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus, p. 84
- “There is in every human being an inherent spiritual blindness. We can’t see the truth. We can’t connect it to ourselves....so faith is impossible without supernatural intervention by God himself.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus p. 85
- “Mary didn’t believe until Jesus met her. She was agitated, panicking, in tears, and not able to see Jesus right before her eyes. But Jesus clears her mind and assures her heart.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus p. 89
- “A sense of Jesus’ absence might be a sign of his presence – a sign that he’s working already in your life. As in Mary’s case, Jesus might be at your side right now and you can’t see it.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus p. 89
- We may be somewhat like Mary; not recognizing Jesus is with us (not physically) when He is with us as the Spirit.
- “The One whom the two disciples [Mary M. & Thomas] long to meet again is the Jesus of their old experience. For both, this is the visible & sensible presence of the earthly Jesus, indicated by Mary’s initial failure to recognize him (20:14-15) & her physical clinging to him (20:17), & by Thomas in his thinking that to see & touch Jesus will provide him with the proof that this is the Jesus he has known (20:25) ... They are both wrong ... [which is] dramatic & theological irony. The attempt by each of them to control the situation is totally illusionary, the only character in control ...is the Johannine Jesus.” [Margaret Beirne, Women & Men in the 4th Gospel pp. 201-2]

3. Not immediately recognizing the resurrected Jesus

- a. Jesus is the same but also different (c.f. Luke 24:13-31 – two on road to Emmaus)
- b. Our resurrection similar; we will be the same person but different

C. To Being Called by Jesus and recognizing him

1. Recognizing Jesus

- Hearing only her name, Mary recognizes the voice of Jesus. As Jesus had taught prior to his crucifixion, “He calls his own sheep by name. ... and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (10:3–4). ESV Study Bible
- Mary’s “preoccupation with searching for [Jesus’] dead body (20:2, 13, 15c) blinds her to the reality of his living presence [standing before her], but the Johannine author implies more than that. In some mysterious way, different from that of the resuscitated Lazarus, the body of Jesus has been transformed [by resurrection] ... At the same time...[there’s] continuity in the relationship between them... It’s [Jesus’] calling her by name that Mary M. recognizes the risen Jesus ... Mary’s ... response indicates that she’s the first to identify the Johannine Jesus as ‘the good shepherd ...It may be regarded as an expression of incipient resurrection faith.” [Margaret Beirne, Women & Men in the 4th Gospel, p. 210]

2. Becoming the first Christian

- “Real faith is always personal. If you only believe that Jesus died to forgive people in general for their sins – but you don’t believe that Jesus died for you- you aren’t taking hold of Jesus by faith. You haven’t heard him call you by name. Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus, p. 98
- “In a sense she becomes the first Christian. ...A Christian believes that Jesus died and was raised from the dead. A Christian has had an encounter with the risen Christ. And at this moment Mary is the only person in the world of whom those things are true.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus, p. 98

D. From clinging to Jesus relating to relating to Him in a new way

1. Jesus helps her to see she cannot hold on to him
 - She can’t keep him – “Do not attempt to hold on to me.”
2. He will soon ascend to the Father

3. The beginning of a new relationship

- “Jesus means: “Mary, when I ascend to the right hand of the Father I won’t be leaving you at all. I will send my Spirit, and through the Spirit you can know my presence, peace, and love day or night.” ...Real faith connects you to Christ, not just for salvation from the penalty of your sins, but for an ongoing love relationship with him.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus, p. 101

4. 2 Cor. 5:16 ... Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

E. From being a follower to being sent

1. Being sent to give a message to Jesus’ disciples

- “Jesus could have easily arranged to make anyone the first messenger. He chose her. And that means Jesus Christ specifically chose a woman, not a man; chose a reformed mental patient, not a pillar of the community; chose one of the support team, not one of the leaders, to be the first Christian.” Timothy Keller, Encounters with Jesus, p. 99

II. The message – a new relationship through the resurrection of Jesus

20:17 But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

A. The disciples are called “my brothers” – a new family

B. God is the Father of Jesus and also their Father

1. The first time God is called “your Father.”

- “This is a milestone in the Gospel, for it is the first and only instance...in which God is explicitly identified as “Father” of anyone except Jesus himself. ...it has always been either “the Father” or “my Father,” never until now “your Father” – this despite the designation of believers as “children of God” (1:13; 11:52).” J. Ramsey Michaels, The Gospel of John, p. 1002

- “Mary is not primarily commissioned to tell the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead (although she does that too in 20:18) but to convey the significance of Jesus’ resurrection for believers, namely, their new status as children of God & as brothers & sisters of Jesus & one another (‘go to my brothers’ in 20:17) (Teresa Okure).” [Cornelis Bennema, Encountering Jesus, p. 335]

2. “My Father and your Father”

- Not “our Father”

- God is the Father of both Jesus and believers but in different senses (1:12,14,18; cf. Rom 8:15-16; Heb 2:11-12). NIV Zondervan Study Bible

- We do not have the same position as Jesus, the Son of God

- In John, Jesus is the unique son of the Father – hence “my Father”

- We are called children of God

- In John’s Gospel, “Jesus is always called ‘Son’, whereas believers are always designated ‘children’. While there are many ‘children’ of God, there is only one Son... This distinction between the filial relationship to God & that of the believers is further underscored by Jesus’ single reference to God as ‘your Father’ when speaking to the disciples, as well as the fact that this reference occurs only after the resurrection (20:17) ... There are two ways of construing relationship to God as Father, embodied in & through two different terms, ‘children’ & ‘Son’.” [Marianne Meye Thompson, God of the Gospel of John, p. 70]

- John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,

- In John we are never called sons of God, yet God is our Father through the resurrection of Jesus – hence “your Father”

C. Through Jesus' resurrection we are born as children of God

- "What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father." J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 200
- 1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
- 1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children—and we are!

III. Mary has a prominent role in the beginning of the church

A. The first to discover the empty tomb – 20:1

B. The first eye-witness of the resurrection – John 20:16; Matt. 28:1, 9-10; Mark 16:9-11

- John "mentions Mary M. [at the cross] because she is the first person to see the risen Jesus. Mary is able to bring continuity to the [proclamation] of the early church because she is a witness to [both] the death & resurrection of Jesus. It's important for John to identify Mary M., since her testimony gives authority to the proclamation of the church." [Susan Miller, *Women in John's Gospel*, p. 108]
 - Richard "Bauckham [Jesus & the Eyewitnesses] recognizes that the period between Jesus & the final completion of Mark [30-65 AD (Fee & Stuart)] & the other Gospels [30-90 AD for John] was spanned by the continual presence & testimony of some who had participated in the history of Jesus: namely, such eyewitnesses as Peter, Andrew, Mary Magdalene, & the sons of Zebedee. They played a central & authoritative role in guiding the transmission of traditions about Jesus, and would not have tolerated 'creative' innovation." [Gerald O'Collins, *St. Augustine on the Resurrection of Christ*, p. 91]
1. Testifying to seeing the resurrected Jesus – "I have seen the Lord!"
 2. Not the only time to give this testimony
- The women continued to give their testimony as long as they lived.
 - Their testimony gave authority and validity to the resurrection not just initially, but for a long time.

C. The first to convey the revelation of a new relationship

- "Saint Jerome (345-420 AD) stated "The risen Lord first appeared to women, who became apostles to the Apostles (apostolae Apostolorum), so that men would be ashamed not to have sought him whom the weaker sex had already found' ... This profound term was... repeated many times in Church history. It is more frequent in the singular – a (female) apostle of the Apostles (apostola Apostolorum) – & referred to Mary Magdalene... [based on] Jn. 20:17-18." [Andrzej Siemieniewski, *Christian Charismatic Movements*, p. 32]
- "Mary M. has a prominent role in John's Gospel as the first witness to the resurrection. Mary meets the risen Jesus, & she is commissioned to pass on the news of the resurrection. John associates Mary M. with the proclamation of the gospel message & the beginning of the mission of the church. John's portrayal of Mary suggests that women may hold the role of teachers & missionaries in the Johannine community. Raymond Brown observes that John presents Mary M. in the role of an apostle... Apostles are defined as those who have seen the risen Jesus & who have been sent to proclaim Jesus (1 Cor. 9:1-12; 15:8-11; Gal. 1:11-16). Sandra Schneiders argues that John's portrayal of Mary M. provides insights into the role of women in the early church ... that a woman was regarded as 'the primary witness' to the resurrection in at least one of the early Christian communities [–John's community]." [Susan Miller, *Women in John's Gospel*, p. 134]
- "The question of who first saw the risen Jesus is theologically significant because the early church regarded the [first appearance] as the manifestation of the primacy of apostolic witness which is the foundation of the Church's faith. According to Paul (1 Cor. 15:3-8) & Luke (24:34) Jesus appeared first to Simon Peter. According to John (20:14-17), Matthew (28:1, 9-10), & [Mark's] appendix (16:9-11) he appeared first to Mary M., who, in Matthew is accompanied by another woman. There are no scholarly grounds for questioning... the tradition that the first Christophany was to Mary M. In fact... this tradition... clearly challenged the Petrine tradition... [So, this] is excellent evidence that it was a

primitive & authentic tradition, carefully preserved by some Churches.” [Sandra M. Schneiders, “Women in the 4th Gospel,” in Mark Stibbe (ed.) *John as Literature*, pp. 139-40]

D. Her prominence has implications for women’s roles in the church

- Jesus’ “appearance to Mary (20:11-18) is noteworthy... because the first...resurrection appearance/commissioning in the [4th] Gospel involves a woman. It is possibly the most poignant & heartwarming (scene) in the entire Gospel. When ...Jesus ...speaks her name, she is ready ...to be charged with a mission. She will do so... as a member of the family of God (20:17), as a child of God (cf. 1:12). To become children of God ...is to participate in the divine family business ...it is inherently missional. Jesus commissions Mary as the first witness to him as risen Lord, & she fulfills the commission (20:17-18). The first ‘missionary’ –the ‘apostle to the apostles’— bears witness to Jesus the risen Lord & thus also to the church’s first missional task. The episode also bears emphatic witness to the critical role of women in that task.” [Michael J. Gorman, *Abide & Go*, p. 136]
- Margaret Beirne argues that women are portrayed as disciples of ‘equal standing’ with men, since women & men both respond to Jesus with faith & at times struggle to understand him... Sandra Schneiders notes that John’s presentation of the meetings between women & Jesus suggests that he [John] has knowledge of women who take part in theological debates & who have the roles of missionaries in the early church. Mary Rose D’Angelo proposes that John’s portrait of women... reflects the charismatic nature of the Johannine community which did not have clearly defined leadership roles & fixed structures.” [Susan Miller, *Women in John’s Gospel*, p. 3]