

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 20:1-18

Topic

John shows us the resurrection of Jesus through the wet eyes of Mary Magdalene

Title

***“Mary, Mary, Quite Despairing,
Where Did His Body Go?”***

Jesus Christ Superstar, The Last Temptation of Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, and The Passion of the Christ, perpetuate the belief that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute.

People are always surprised to learn that *nowhere* does the Bible say she was a prostitute.

Maybe *The Chosen* gets it right. Nope. They depleted all of their creative license on Mary. Here is the backstory they contrived:

Mary lives in the Red Quarter, the worst district in Capernaum. There she was sexually assaulted by a Roman officer. After the encounter, darkness descended on her soul and seven demons possessed her. When the demons controlled her, she would terrorize the neighborhood, going by the name Lilith. One day, the Romans were made aware of Lilith's possession and ordered a leader of the Pharisees [Nicodemus] to perform an exorcism to drive the demons out, but he fails, witnessing the demons in terror.

In Dan Brown's 2003 best-selling fictional book-made-movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, Mary was not a prostitute. It is worse. Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and had children and that the Holy Grail of legend and lore is really Mary Magdalene, the 'sacred feminine,' the vessel who carried Jesus' children.

Remember the mini-series called *The Bible*? They did a good job, never once even hinting she was immoral.

Why do we think of her as a prostitute? One word: Pope Gregory I. On September 14, 1591, Gregory gave a homily in Rome pronouncing that Mary Magdalene was Luke's "woman in the city who was a sinner" (7:37) who washed Jesus' feet with ointment and dried them with her hair.

Mary is mentioned twelve times in the New Testament. In the majority of them she is at the Cross or the tomb.

Mary Magdalene was the first person to set eyes upon the resurrected Christ. John tells his resurrection story through her experiences with the risen Lord.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 The Power That Raised Jesus Will Accompany Your Serving**, and **#2 The Power That Raised Jesus Will Anoint Your Sharing**.

#1 - The Power That Raised Jesus Will Accompany Your Serving (v1-10)

David Wilkerson writes, *"Often I feel like a drained car battery. If you forget to turn off the lights of your car, all you get the next day is that dreaded noise - urr... urr - the empty clinking sound of dead machinery."*

There are passages in the New Testament that indicate a church, and hence the believers in it, can make the empty clinking sound of dead machinery:

- The apostle Paul chided the churches in Galatia. They had started as Christians always do, in the power of the resurrection of Jesus by which we have the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. But they were like a dead battery in that they were trying to live the Christian life in their own power.
- The Lord's beloved church in Ephesus was running like a well-oiled machine; *and that was their problem*. Jesus let them know they had left their first love and the result was a mechanical representation of what ought to be a loving relationship.

Why think of yourself as a battery that runs out when the same power that raised Jesus from the dead dwells within you?

Romans 8:11 summarizes everything I'm going to say today: "God raised Jesus to life! God's Spirit now lives in you, and He will raise you to life by His Spirit."

This is a promise for now and for eternity. Let's look at the 'now.'

Joh 20:1 Now the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

The "first day of the week" is Sunday. Post-resurrection of Jesus, the New Testament encourages us to gather on Sunday:

- Jesus rose on Sunday (Mark 16:9).
- Christians are recorded assembling three times on Sunday after resurrection and before ascension (John 20:19 John 20:26 Acts 2:1).
- The church was born on a Sunday (Acts 2:1).
- The only day ever mentioned when Christians broke bread was on Sunday (Acts 20:7).
- Christians are commanded every Sunday to give to the church (First Corinthians 16:1-2).

Two things to clarify about Sunday worship:

1. Sunday is *not* the new Sabbath Day for the church. Jesus is our Sabbath, our rest, *everyday*. We have no ritual Sabbath to keep, whether Saturday or Sunday.
2. You can worship any day of the week; Sunday isn't a must.

"Magdalene" is not Mary's last name. It would be better to call her Mary of Magdala, a city by the shore of the city of Galilee. For the remainder of our talk, when I say "Mary," I mean Mary of Magdala.

She came "while it was still dark." Jesus had first come to her when she was still dark. We learn elsewhere in the Gospels that she was possessed by seven demons. She had personally experienced His power by having seven demons cast out of her.

A quick sidebar: We've been suggesting that demons are *not* fallen angels, but their own category of wicked supernatural creatures. They seem to be disembodied spirits that crave a body to inhabit. That doesn't seem to fit angels or fallen angels.

Mary went to the tomb believing that it had been shut and sealed, therefore not having a way to enter. It teaches us to take one step at a time, to move forward in the Lord's will, and let Him, as we like to say, open doors... Or in this case, the tomb.

Joh 20:2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

"We [plural] do not know where they have laid Him." There were other women with Mary, as few as two, or as many as four. It is hard to harmonize all four accounts.

Peter had denied the Lord. John was with him, and Mary came to them. Bishop Ryle writes, *"The love and tender nature of John's character come out most blessedly in his affection for Peter, even after his denial of Christ. John clings to him, and has him under his own roof."*

They were living-out what Paul would later advise, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2).

How much more can we do this, post-resurrection, now that *God lives within us.*

It has been said that the first unbelievers of the resurrection of Jesus were the believers. Mary expected to find Jesus' dead body. She had no hope in His resurrection.

The action momentarily shifts to Peter and John.

Joh 20:3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb.

Joh 20:4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.

We often wish the inspired writers of Scripture would have included additional details. We have a lot of unanswered questions.

I find it therefore hilarious that John felt it was necessary to point out that he “outran Peter and came to the tomb first.” Seriously, would that have been something you asked about?

Joh 20:5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in.

Joh 20:6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*,

Who knows. Maybe Peter shouted, “*Don’t go in there without me!*”

Peter and John had only the testimony of Mary. They didn’t know what to expect. It isn’t hard to imagine that they thought Mary mistaken and that the body of Jesus was still in the tomb. Or that grave-robbers were in the vicinity.

Joh 20:7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

J.C. Ryle commented,

*The body was gone from the tomb; the clothes were left behind, and the condition of them indicated that Christ had passed [through] them without their being un-wrapped. If friends had removed the body, would they not have taken the clothes with it, still covering the honored corpse? If foes had removed the body, first stripping it, would they have been so careful to dispose of the clothes and napkin in the orderly manner in which John now beheld them? Everything pointed to deliberation and design, and the apostle could draw only one conclusion - **Christ had risen.***

Speaking of questions that we wish the Bible would give us the answer to: It would seem that when we are raptured we will go *through* our clothes, leaving them behind. Secular thrift stores everywhere will profit from our being caught-up. We will immediately be in our new bodies wearing the promised robe of righteousness.

Joh 20:8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.

Joh 20:9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

At that moment he knew that Jesus had been restored to life, but he did not yet fully apprehend that the Scriptures predicted the resurrection of the Messiah. They

needed the insights Jesus shared with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

Joh 20:10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

You'd think an emergency meeting of the eleven was in order. Or that they'd want to be together. Compare and contrast this with the Day of Pentecost. After three thousand pilgrims from all over Judea were saved, *they didn't leave Jerusalem*. They hung around to be taught by the eleven and share in daily fellowship with one another.

There is nothing deficient with our worshipping together once or twice weekly. But you will know it is revival when people won't go home.

It was the first day of the week, and Mary came to be with the body of Jesus, bringing fragrances to minister to His body.

It is the first day of the week, and we have come to be with the body of Jesus on Earth, the church, bringing gifts to minister to His body.

We saw a hint of what ministering to the body on Earth is to be like in the treatment of Peter by John and Mary (and we can assume the others).

We could go a lot of directions here, making comparisons. One will do, to get you thinking. The spices the Jews used were myrrh and aloes. Myrrh was to give the body a fragrance, masking the decay. Aloe helped myrrh and the linen wrappings to stick to the body.

We read in Second Corinthians 2:15-16, "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?"

Get together, especially on Sunday, and get ministered to and minister as "the fragrance of Christ" among Christians. Then "Go," diffusing Jesus to the saved and the unsaved.

#2 - The Power That Raised Jesus Will Anoint Your Sharing (v11-18)

"Anoint" is one of those vocabulary words we use within the family of believers. We mean by it, I think, to convey that we desire our serving God be in the power of the resurrection by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and not in our own strength.

Obi-wan called Vader "More machine than man." A Christian, or your church, can become more machine than man when it comes to serving the Lord.

I don't want to be mechanical; neither do you. I want to be fruitful; so do you. Having begun in the Spirit, we want to continue in the Spirit.

Believe that the power that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, providing you all the sufficiency of grace to walk worthy of your Lord. Believe it *anoints* you.

Joh 20:11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb.

Joh 20:12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Mary lingered and "saw two angels." One angel sat at the head, the other at the feet, of where Jesus had lain.

It depicts the Mercy Seat that served as the lid for the Ark of the Covenant which featured "two cherubim [stretching] out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, [facing] one another." (see Exodus 25)

The Lord said, "And there I will meet with thee... between the two cherubims" (25:22). Jesus Christ is the true meeting-place between God and man.

Joh 20:13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

We can speculate Mary felt alone, lost, without purpose, confused, directionless. (Add your own adjectives, from your own times of despair).

When you feel that way, quickly remember that Jesus promised to never, ever, no never, leave you or forsake you. Say to yourself, "Why am I weeping?" That is, weeping as if you had no hope.

You know where Jesus is.

You know that He could come for you at any moment. You know all about the world's future. As for the present, you are enabled to live by this principle: "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better" (Philippians 1:21&23).

Joh 20:14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.

The last time Mary had seen Jesus He barely looked human. He'd been beaten, crowned with thorns, had His beard plucked out. His abused body had been wrapped. Add to that she had no expectation Jesus was alive, and she was stressing about the location of His body. In addition to all that, she probably had failing eyesight, and there was no LensCrafters on the way to the tomb.

John seems to be stressing that, whether or not you recognize Him working, the Lord is present in resurrection power.

Joh 20:15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

God is romantic, in the purest sense. While we studiously dig deep into, let's say, the Doctrine of Redemption, God gives us the Book of Ruth.

It explains our redemption through a romantic love story between Boaz and Ruth. We need the scholarship, but with feeling.

I think Jesus hid His identity on purpose, to be romantic. It reminds me of those scenes where the wife is on the phone with her husband, thinking he's far away, when he is in the next room, about to reveal himself.

Joh 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice, and that He calls us by name. Nobody knows you like Jesus knows you.

Sorry, Dan Brown. She called Jesus, "My Teacher," not "My lover," or "My husband." How old do you think Mary was? According to Britannica, Mary was approximately 54 to 59 years old when Jesus died - **more than twenty years His senior.**

Joh 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "

I found this on happify.com

Hugging can be described as a handshake from the heart. The simple action of embracing creates feel-good energy for both the giver and recipient. Science has been looking into its positive effects, and numerous studies have been reaching the same conclusion - hugging is a crucial part of human development.

Huggers - *you don't hug long enough.* When people hug for 20 seconds or more, the feel-good hormone oxytocin is released which creates a stronger bond and connection between the huggers. Oxytocin has been shown to boost the immune system and reduce stress.

Jesus wasn't an anti-hugger. What He was communicating to Mary was that His relationship with her was changing. He would ascend into Heaven, no longer bodily present with her. Instead, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to indwell her, and all those who believe in Him and are born-again.

Joh 20:18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her.

Joseph Benson writes, "*Mary had seen the Lord alive, and He had spoken these things unto her as a message to be delivered to them, and she delivered it faithfully. Observe, reader, when God comforts us, it is with this design, that we should comfort others. And they that are acquainted with the word of Christ themselves, should communicate their knowledge for the good of others.*"

Jesus would *ascend* and *send*:

- He *ascended* to Heaven.

- He *sent* God the Holy Spirit to indwell, empower, enable, and embolden. Indeed, to anoint us.

“God raised Jesus to life! God’s Spirit now lives in you, and He will raise you to life by His Spirit.”