

What 'He Is Risen' Meant to Mary Magdalene

"Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons" (Mark 16:9).

Jesus first appeared to Mary! Not to King Herod. Not to Pontius Pilate. Not to the Roman Caesar. Not to any VIP or dignitary or religious leader. Not even to Nicodemus or any of His disciples. But to Mary, who used to have seven devils who tormented her day and night and made her darkness even darker every single day. They made her life a living hell until the greatest lover of all mankind came along.

Mary Magdalene's nightmare was over. Her tormentors were cast out for good by the master of them all. Her darkness turned into incredible brilliant light.

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

Mary's death turned to life. It was like a prelude of things to come. Her time with her strong-armed deliverer would only get sweeter as the days went by. The words to that old melodic song seem reminiscent of how she felt: "Oh what a love between my Lord and I!"

What an indescribable love Mary now knew! It reminds me of my early days with Jesus when that song became my most precious one to sing among so many. There's nothing like the dawning of a new bright day when the soul has only known sin, darkness and death, but now a new glory fills it.

I remember standing amongst believers as a brand-new convert in a service with a Christian friend when I started sobbing

uncontrollably as the congregation sang another now-old simple, sweet melody, "He has made me glad." My older Christian friend couldn't believe I was sobbing at the sound of such a happy song.

But at that moment, I was remembering the great sadness and sorrow from which my Jesus had rescued me. In particular, I was remembering what doctors called a "psychotic break," which happened when I heard the devil's audible voice that launched me into a fear-filled frenzy and admittance into a mental institution for a brief time. I was just 20 years old. The gratitude and real love my heart was now bursting with must have been what Mary felt only a hundredfold more. Every day with Jesus was like heaven on earth for her. Just as I did as a new convert, she became a devoted follower of Jesus and, for the first time, a valued member of a true family.

All was well with Mary's soul until that fateful Friday when her lover was taken away, arrested and then brutally crucified. How could it be? How could the one who mastered the winds and the sea, and every demon from hell, including the seven that enslaved her, be killed? How could the one who gave her so much life be overcome by death? How could one so full of love who had done so much good be rejected and forsaken by all and suffer so much? Mary couldn't understand. At least not yet.

After experiencing a deep grief and sorrow that she thought was gone forever, after three long foreboding days of her previous tormentors lying to her, she must have remembered the words of Jesus foretelling that He would be raised from the dead.

"He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days *rise again*" (Mark 8:31, author's emphasis).

With a fresh, undying hope in her heart, Mary awakened early after a restless night and rushed to the tomb of her deliverer. She noted immediately that the stone had been removed and His body taken away. So she ran to Peter and John and told them. They both ran together to go see for themselves, and went in and saw the empty tomb. The Scripture says they believed, but it wasn't reality to them.

"For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must now rise from the dead" (John 20:9).

So they went back home (vs. 10). Can you believe it? But not Mary. She stood at the tomb weeping.

Then the most incredible thing happened. She saw two angels in the empty tomb who asked her why she was weeping (v. 13), and then she saw someone she supposed to be the gardener, who also asked her why she was weeping and whom she was seeking. She asked him where the body of Jesus was because she wanted to take it away (v. 15).

Then He said her name, and that's when everything changed. Oh glory! When the master calls your name, everything changes. This speaks of the intimate and special relationship Mary had with Jesus. In the thrill and excitement of that glorious moment, she reached out to embrace Him but was restrained until after the ascension. All she could do now was look but not touch (v. 17).

She must have looked into His eyes and witnessed the depths of what she now knew to be an eternal and everlasting love. When she looked upon Jesus, not only did His eyes love her, but His hands, His feet, His mouth, His lips, His very skin and flesh and bones loved her. At that moment, all Mary could see was love. Oh, if every human on the earth could see what Mary saw in that brief moment, all would be well with their souls. True love, an eternal love. A love that never goes away and never dies is what the whole world needs.

He is risen. His life and love are eternal. He loves you and me. We are free. We are full of joy. we will live forever.

Rejoice! Happy Easter, everyone! {eoa}

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