

Corn Maze Introduction

Jesus found Mary Magdalene when she was lost, He gave her a new direction, He told her to find others. If you are feeling lost this morning, Jesus has found you. He wants to give you a purpose. He wants us to help the lost people in our lives.

Mary Magdalene was lost. Not physically, but emotionally. We don't know much about her from the text. The idea that she was a prostitute or secretly married Jesus – that's not found anywhere in the Bible. What we know is that she had **7 demons** cast out of her by Jesus. And we know a little about demon possession – examples. And then she followed Jesus.

But now Jesus was dead. While many of the disciples deserted or denied Jesus, Mary and the other women were there at the cross. They were there watching him get buried. **They saw his dead body put into the tomb.** This man who had saved Mary, whom she had left whatever she had left to follow, he was really and truly dead. The miracle of Easter is not that Jesus escaped death. He died. And Mary Magdalene knew it.

If she had anything keeping her going, it seems to be the **mission** she had taken on. **Anoint the body of Jesus with spices.** The other gospel accounts tell us that Mary wasn't alone, she and other women had gone, early in the morning, to anoint Jesus for burial. This was a ceremonial custom that they hadn't been able to finish on Friday, and couldn't do on the Sabbath. So first thing in the morning Mary woke up to finish the job. But then there was a problem, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus was gone.

Now Mary's purpose changes. Her mission is not to put spices on a body, her mission is to tell the disciples that something is wrong. The text tells us she runs to find them. And when she does she tells them, "They have taken the Lord and we don't know where they have put them." On Mary's announcement Peter and John run back to the tomb to investigate. They find out that the body is gone, but the grave clothes remain. John points out that not only did he beat Peter to the tomb on foot, he also beat Peter to the belief that Jesus rose again from the dead. But he gives that aside, that he didn't really understand from the scripture all that Jesus had accomplished.

So Mary follows them back. We have to assume she lagged a ways behind, since they were racing each other, and she had run to go find them in the first place. So we don't know when she arrived. Were they still there looking in the tomb? Had they already left by the time she got there? **In any case, Mary is lost again.** She is alone in the Garden, wondering what to do next. Weeping. Four times the text emphasizes that Mary is weeping. She must have been crying pretty hard.

And then she's not alone. At least, not physically alone. Because she looks in the tomb and sees two angels. And they ask her, "woman, why are you weeping?" Now, maybe they are asking rhetorically. Like, "Hey! Jesus is alive! There's no reason to cry!" But I wonder if it's not more likely that she was just so overcome by her emotions there was nothing to say except why are you weeping? When my son is crying uncontrollably, and he's almost 4 so this happens somewhat frequently, there's no reasoning with him. It's all comfort. It's, "Why are you crying?" "Can you tell me what happened?" "Are you okay?"

And notice how Mary responds. This is now the second time she's conveying her understanding of the situation. With the disciples she says, "They have taken THE Lord and WE don't know..." Here, talking to the angels, she phrases it differently. She doesn't know who these two guys are, but she knows they are not the disciples. Maybe they're bystanders, maybe they're graverobbers. Whoever they are, Mary doesn't include them in the "we". She is not referencing Jesus as "our" Lord or even "the" Lord but "my" Lord. She doesn't know if these two men she's talking to understand who Jesus is. They might not be on her side. She's not talking people who are with her, she's talking to people but she's really on her own.

And then Mary encounters the final person at the grave. She turns and sees a man, who she assumes to be the gardener. And he also asks her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" And again Mary repeats what she thinks to be the situation, but again the wording shifts. Now it's not, "They have taken" but it's "Sir, if you have carried him away." Mary thinks she is talking to the person who moved his body. Now it says she thinks he's a gardener and not necessarily a grave robber. But in any case, she thinks that this man is the one who has caused her so much distress. And she is straightforward. Have you ever been in a situation of adrenaline where you just lose all sense of fear or caution and you just do what needs to be done? That's the zone Mary is in. "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him." Mary is so focused that she's not only talking to the man who she thinks may have taken Jesus away, she thinks he's going to tell her where he is, and then she thinks she's going to single-handedly manhandle him back into the tomb. It's not, "Sir, where is he? I'll go get the disciples to help me." It's not, "Sir, where is he? Those two strangers who showed up in the tomb are going to help drag him back." **It's "I will get him."** Mary is convinced that she is all by herself. She is on her own. She's completely lost and alone.

Except, we know the great and beautiful truth of this moment. And she's about to realize it too. Jesus says one word, her name. He says, "Mary." And she knows. She knows who He is, and what that means, and all of her fear and worry and weeping is answered. Her eyes are opened and she sees who it is who is really in front of her. She was in such a headspace, she was prepared to go haul a dead body and in an instant she knows that the man who saved her isn't dead. He wasn't defeated. He is alive and He is there with her, speaking to her, calling her name.

She calls out “**Rabbouni**” which means “my teacher” and she clings to Him. She holds on so tightly Jesus tells her to stop, because there’s still work to be done.

Mary was lost. And she felt absolutely alone. But in that moment of her absolute distress and loneliness, the answer to her problem was standing right in front of her. Not only was Jesus’ body not stolen, **Jesus wasn’t dead anymore. He was there, with her, in that garden. He is with her, calling her name.**

And even though Mary had given herself all sorts of goals and tasks and things to do, when Jesus speaks to her everything changes. Mary had thought she was supposed to put spices on a dead body. Then she thought she was supposed to get the disciples to find the dead body. Then she thought she was supposed to single handedly get the dead body back into the tomb. But **there was no dead body.** Jesus was alive. And when He reveals Himself to Mary He gives her an even more important job to do. The message of Easter is not an empty tomb but a risen Lord.

Go to my brothers. Even in that sentence, **Jesus is saying that something has changed.** In John’s gospel account there has been a distinction between Jesus’ disciples and Jesus’ brothers. Jesus had family members who are designated as brothers in other places in John’s account, but here Jesus is clearly talking about His disciples. And Mary understands that because she goes to tell the disciples. But Jesus now refers to them as His brothers, and He doubles down on that with His statement, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” John had told us that he believed that Jesus came back to life when he saw the graveclothes, but that he didn’t understand from the Scriptures the significance of what Jesus’ resurrection means. Now Jesus is telling Mary the crucial part. Because Jesus died and rose again His followers are no longer just followers, they are brothers. Because Jesus died and rose again, we no longer worship a God who is distant and separate, we worship a God who holds us close and calls us His children. We can speak to Him as Lord, and God, and Savior, but also as Abba, Father. Jesus tells this amazing truth to Mary Magdalene and trusts her to share it with the disciples. They did not understand from the scripture what Jesus had done, but Mary was going to tell them.

This one sentence sermon that Mary announces, that Jesus is alive, He is ascending to the Father, and that now all of His followers will have a new relationship with God – that’s a one sentence sermon that will change the world.

Are you feeling emotionally lost today? Are you facing something where you feel absolutely alone? Are you dealing with something that no one else could possibly understand? Because this morning, here, Jesus is calling your name. He wants you to know that no matter how alone you feel, how much you think you’re on your own, He sees you. He’s near you. He

understands. Why are you weeping today? Because Christ is here to comfort you in your struggles. You are not alone. Jesus finds us when we feel lost and alone.

Are you searching for your purpose and your calling this morning? Can you relate to how Mary was feeling as she searched around that tomb. Whom are you seeking? Jesus gave Mary a completely different role than the one she was trying to play. Are you willing to hear from Jesus about what He has for you next? Have you put yourself in a position to hear Jesus call your name, change your life, give you new direction? If you don't know Him already, He wants to give you a new purpose, a new focus, a new life in Him. If you know Him but you feel like you've lost your way, He is here, today, to redirect you. You don't need to be lost anymore.

And if you know this truth, if this message has personally impacted your life. **Who are you called to go and tell?** Whether that's by explicitly stating the gospel message or finding ways to reflect the compassion and patience of Christ to someone feeling lost in themselves. If you've been found by God, who do you need to seek and find in your own life?

In that garden Mary represents the hope that the gospel provides. Years before in a garden, the garden of Eden, a woman had been given a job to do by God. Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth. But that woman was deceived. She embraced death rather than God. Her actions led to the death of all of humankind, breaking the relationship between the creator and his creation. She hid from Him as He sought her out, calling to her and her husband, "Where are you?" Here again in a garden a woman is confronted with death. In a sense she is deceived, as the cloud of tragedy keeps her from seeing the reality of what has transpired. But this woman does not hide, she seeks the Lord and is found by Him. He reveals that his actions have canceled the curse of death. He has fixed the failed relationship. And in a moment of restoration, in that Garden, He gives her a new job. Share what has happened. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with this good news. In the first garden the woman was named Eve, as the mother of all the living. In the Easter garden the woman was named Mary. Not the Mary who was the mother of Christ, but Mary Magdalene, the mother to the gospel message.

That family that called the police for help getting out of the **Corn Maze** were found 25 feet from the exit. The story ended up making national news and the owners of the farm responded to the situation. They said that while they appreciated the family not wanting to ruin the maze, in a situation like that it would have been totally fine for them to just cut through the corn. The lost family felt trapped, and lost, and alone. What they didn't see at the time was how close they were to being safe. Mary felt lost and alone, until she realized Jesus was actually right there. Are you in a corn maze this morning? Are you lost and alone? Because Jesus has come to find you this morning. Allow yourself to be found by Him, for alleluia He is risen indeed.