

Monday, April 5, 2021

II Chronicles 16: 9a; Luke 8:1-3a; John 20: 10-18

“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him....”

“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, and also women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others....”

“Then the disciples (John and Peter) went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying?’ ‘They have taken my Lord away,’ she said, ‘and I don’t know where they have put him.’ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ‘Woman,’ He said, ‘why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’ Thinking He was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni’ (which means Teacher). Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ And she told them that He had said these things to her.”

Have you ever wondered why Mary Magdalene was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after He arose from the grave? The other women who had gone with Mary Magdalene to the grave to anoint Jesus saw the empty tomb, but did not see Jesus. After Mary Magdalene told Peter and John that Jesus was not in the grave, they ran to the tomb and also saw that it was empty. But they did not see Jesus. Mary returned to the empty grave by herself to mourn and weep for the awful death of her Lord. Perhaps it was the depth of her grief and loss that touched the heart of Jesus.

Of all Jesus’ healings, there is no real description of Mary’s. Luke, the beloved physician, who writes systematically and chronologically about the life of Jesus on earth, is very clear about Mary’s healing. He distinguishes between physical healings and her healing. Mary’s was a deep spiritual healing. She was set free from seven demons. (Mark says the same.) If indeed Mary’s life was being controlled by demonic oppression, it is hard to imagine the depth of her suffering. We know nothing as to the kind of turmoil she suffered, but many of us have had to face our own demons in life: PTSD; addictions; sexual abuse; loss of jobs and security; marital problems; depression; loss of faith; the death of someone we love; suicide. As we look around us, we can get an idea of the depth of hopelessness Mary Magdalene must have been suffering. Then Jesus saw Mary, touched her by His love and her life was transformed from one of a living death to a life of beauty and hope. She saw how Jesus’ deep love for people gave them new life and new hope. Then Jesus was gone.

I believe Jesus appeared to Mary first and called her by name because of all people Mary loved Him for Who He really is. She didn’t love Jesus because she thought He would be the earthly king or leader of the Jewish people or just because she wanted to see spectacular healings. Mary loved Jesus because she knew the depth of this humble Servant’s healing love. Now Jesus was gone and her despair was deep. So Jesus lovingly called her by name, “Mary”, and revealed Himself to her. Jesus lovingly gave Mary the privilege and joy of being the first to spread His good news. “I have seen the Lord!” Jesus is alive!!!

Prayer: Dear Abba Father, precious Jesus, sweet Holy Spirit, thank You for this beautiful season of hope – this hope born out of death freely given for us. Jesus’ death transformed into hope by His resurrection. Help us to grasp the depth of the cost and cherish it. Help us to be like Mary and joyfully proclaim, “Jesus is alive!!!” Amen.

Jean Gleason