



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

April 17, 2022

Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

Easter Sunday: John 20:1-19 “Come and See” is now “Go and tell”

Mary was distraught. Only days before, she witnessed the death of Jesus. It was a brutal, violent act that was meant to destroy not only the man but also his memory. Crucifixion was meant to do more than kill someone. It was meant to inflict so much shame on a person that no one associated with the victim would ever want to admit it.

On the third day after Jesus was crucified Mary defied the social norm and searched for him. She knew where he was laid, and when she approached the tomb she found that the stone was rolled away. She ran and got two of his friends and all they did was confirm what she told them. Jesus was gone. Looking back into the tomb, she was unfazed by two angels standing in a tomb that she just saw was empty.

When they were no help, she turned toward a gardener, and cried out, “I do not know where they have put my Lord.” She was searching frantically. She watched him suffer. She watched him die. She could still smell the scent of the oils she had poured over his feet (although this is ambiguous, there is a strong argument by Diana Butler Bass among others that claim that the Mary who anointed Jesus’ feet is this same woman known as Mary Magdalene). The feet she had washed with her tears and hair were pierced in front of her. He was dead.

And now he was gone. Adding insult to shameful injury, he was gone. She must have turned her head again after asking the gardener about him because when he spoke her name the Scripture says she had to turn again to face him.

“Mary,” he said, and everything changed.

Why didn’t she recognize him? Was he transformed in some way? Was his resurrected form intrinsically different? Was she just too frantic to notice? Was it just too improbable to believe? Whatever reason she did not recognize him, that all changed when he called her by name. He saw her, and she saw resurrection. In that moment she experienced the new life in Christ. She was the first person to experience Easter. She was the first person to witness Resurrection, and she knew it in one beautiful moment when he recognized her first. He called her by name and new life began.

Reading between the lines, I am pretty sure that she said “Teacher!” then threw her arms around him and they hugged (Why else would he say, “Do not hold onto me,” unless she was already holding onto him?). Then he tells her, “Go and tell my brothers and sisters.” So she went back to the disciples and told them, “I have seen the Lord.”

There are moments here that should take us back in the story. Back to the first moments of Jesus and his disciples. Here’s a quick recap of Jesus’ first spoken exchange in the Gospel of John:

Jesus’ first words are “What are you looking for?”

The first disciples say, “Rabbi, Where are you staying?” Jesus responds, “Come and see.” The disciples then go and tell Peter, “We have found the Messiah.”

In this first moment of resurrection, Jesus says first to Mary, “Who are you looking for?”

She says, “What did you put him?” He then calls her by name, and she says simply, “Rabbi.”

And then he tells her, “Go and tell.” Mary then goes and tells Peter, “I have seen the Lord.”

Notice the parallels:

John 1

First words of the Gospel

“What are you looking for?”

“Where are you staying?”

“Come and See.”

“We have found the Messiah”

John 20

First words after resurrection

“Who are you looking for?”

“Where did you put him?”

“Go and tell.”

“I have seen the Lord.”

The Gospel of John started with Jesus telling them to “Come and See,” and they did. They saw him teach Nicodemus at night and the Samaritan woman at noon. The wedding began with turning water into wine and his life ended when the wine was turned back into water. They saw him heal a blind man, a man by the pool, and a royal official’s son. They saw him feed 5,000 with a boy’s lunch. They saw incredible abundance, astounding hospitality, and compassion. They saw what it meant to love in ways that upended everything. They saw what it meant to abide with Christ.

Then when Empire could not abide that kind of love any more, Pilate did what Empires do. They tried to annihilate him. They tried to end him. End his life. End his memory. End his very existence. The Cross was a form of terror and erasure because an Emperor could not abide a Kingdom of God.

Then, there was more. The Cross was not the end. Empire did not get the last word. Jesus was alive. Mary knew it the moment he spoke her name. Then he told her, “Go and tell,” so we are left with that commission. We have seen love. We have seen community and what it means to abide with Christ. Now it is our turn to go and tell.