

2024 B Easter Sunday – Resurrection of the Lord March 31

Today is a day of great joy and celebration. That's because Christ who had been through a hell – suffered, dead and buried and rose from the tomb, is now in glory. Let us rejoice and celebrate. In him we have the victory.

**“Weeping may last through the night”** (Ps. 30:5) and may last few more nights. Just ask the teenager who lost her way or a widow in the cemetery. It is not new.

But **“joy comes with the morning”** (Ps 30:5 b). Despair will not rule the day. Sorrow will not last forever. The clouds may eclipse the sun, but they will not eliminate it. Night may delay the dawn, but it cannot defeat it. Morning comes. Not as quickly as we want. But morning comes, and with it comes joy.

Do you need this promise? Have you wept a river? Have you forsaken hope? Do you wonder if a morning will ever bring this night to an end?

Mary Magdalene did. In the forest of the New Testament, she is the weeping lady. Tragedy cast its coldest winter on her. Before she knew Jesus she had seven demons. She was a prisoner of seven afflictions. What might this list include? Depression? Loneliness? Shame? Fear? Perhaps, she was a prostitute. Mary Magdalene was completely consumed with troubles.

But then something happened. Jesus stepped into her world. He spoke and the demons fled. For the first time, the oppressive, obsessive forces were gone. Banished, Evicted. Mary Madalene slept well, ate well and smiled again.

She was one of the female followers of Christ who with her own resources supported Jesus' mission. Wherever Jesus went she went. She heard Jesus teach, saw him perform miracles. She was always near Jesus.

Even at his crucifixion, she stood near the cross. She saw when they pounded the nails in his hands, when they pierced his side with a spear, she saw the blood. When they lowered his body from the cross, she was there to help prepare it for the burial. On Friday Mary Magdalene watched Jesus, die. On Saturday she observed the Sabbath.

When Sunday came, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to finish the work she had begun on Friday. It was still dark. When she arrived at the tomb, the bad news became worse. Mary saw the stone had been moved and the body was not there. She hurried to tell Peter and John and told them that “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb.”

Peter and John came and saw the empty tomb and went. But Mary Magdelene was still there at the tomb weeping.

Mary's world had officially hit rock bottom. Her master murdered. He was buried in a borrowed grave. His tomb was robbed. His body was stolen. Now sorrow intermingled with anger.

Have you ever had a moment like this? In a moment bad news became worse. You came looking for God yet couldn't find him? So, you will love what happened next. In this, **Mary's darkest moment**, the sun came out.

When she turned around, she saw Jesus standing there, and she didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking." She thought he was the gardener. So, Jesus called her by her name, "Mary." Then, immediately she knew that it was Jesus. In that moment her world went from a dead Jesus to a living one. Weeping may last through the night, but remember, joy will come ... Mary fell at his feet and held him – maybe his ankles.

This moment serves as a sacred role in the Easter story. It at once, reminds us, the conquering King and the Good Shepherd. He has power over death. But he also has a soft spot for Mary and the world. The mighty Champion is relentlessly tender.

Why? Why her? As far as we know no New Testament story describes her work. Why did Risen Jesus create this moment for Mary Magdalene? Perhaps to send this message to all the heavyhearted people. "Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning," (Ps. 31:5). Joy comes.

Joy comes because Jesus comes. If we don't recognize his face, he will call our names. "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands," (Isa. 49:16). Your name is not buried in some heavenly file. Your name is engraved or tattooed on his hand. He has more thoughts of you than the grains of sand on the beach.

Joy comes. Expect it as you would the morning sunrise. It came to Mary Magdalene. Do what people of the promise do. Keep coming to Jesus. Even though the trail is dark. Even though the sun seems to sleep. Even though everyone around you is silent. Walk to Jesus. Mary Magdalene did this. She didn't understand the promise of Jesus. She came to see the dead body of Jesus. But at least she came. And because she came to him, Jesus came to her.

And you? You'll be tempted to give up and walk away. But don't. Even though you don't feel like it, keep walking the trail to the tomb. Read the Bible. Reflect on it. Sing the songs. Talk to other believers. Listen carefully to Jesus, maybe whispering. The gardener very well might be your Redeemer.

Weeping comes. It comes to all of us. But so does joy. Darkness comes. So does the morning. Sorrow may have the night, but it cannot have our lives. Hallelujah!!!