

The Gathering Church
Sonia's message:
4/5/26
Resurrection Day Sermon

I HAVE SEEN THE LORD

Three days, and everything in Mary Magdalene's world had changed forever.

But really, three years before that everything had already changed for her. Three years before this day, seven demons had enslaved her, making her life feel like she lived in an unescapable tomb. Jesus of Nazareth had freed her, bound her heart to his, and transformed her life from her hellish bondage. After that, she followed him wherever and whenever she could. But now, the One who had freed her lay lifeless in a tomb, tightly bound in linen clothes that hid his scarred and beaten body from her eyes. She had stood at the foot of his cross, horrified, as the people he came to rescue, crucified him. How could this be? She had to see him, and take care of him, one last time. Despair felt like a weight in her chest as she listened to the heavy breathing of her friends, and a quiet thought of *'but, didn't he say he would rise'* seemed to taunt her with hope.

Matthew 27 tells us about the dilemma that faced the Mary Magdalene and the other women. The chief priests and Pharisees told Pilate:

*⁶³ "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." ⁶⁶ So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by **sealing the stone**.*

All four gospels from varying perspectives relate what happened. Starting with Matthew:

- Matthew's story: *When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb, **there was a great earthquake, and an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel tells the women, "He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. (28:6)***
- Mark recounts that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to anoint Messiah's body, pondering, *"**Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?**" (16:1-3)*

It is remarkable how this real problem failed to dissuade these women from gathering up their spices and going to anoint their Messiah's body! But we later read how their persistence is later rewarded, because when they get there, the problem was already solved:

"When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back." (4)

There is a young man at the tomb, dressed in a white robe with good news, gently saying:

*“Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. **He has been raised; he is not here.** Look, there is the place they laid him. **But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.**” (16:6–8)*

So far, there’s a *great earthquake*, and an angel who looks like a young man trying to appear non-frightening by sitting on a stone and conversationally telling them that their Messiah is not there. There’s also a *very large*, formerly problematic but-now-absent stone that is no longer blocking the entrance to the Messiah’s tomb. **And Jesus’ body is no longer in the tomb.**

- Luke describes *his* knowledge of the events that transpired:

*“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. **They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body.**” (24:1)*

What they do find are *two* men in dazzling clothes, asking,

*“**Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember** how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to the hands of sinners and be crucified and on the third day rise again.” (24:5-6)*

*“**Returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.**” (24:9)*

- Finally, John tells us that Mary Magdalene finds the stone rolled away, and runs and tells Peter and John,

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” (20:2)

Peter and John run and see what the women saw,

“the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’s head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.” (20:6-7)

Jesus was not there but was alive. The women carry the good news to the frightened and crushed disciples, with Simon Peter and John running to the tomb to witness the same astonishing events...**a missing body**, with its abandoned linen wrappings neatly folded, and face cloth separated from the shroud.

I realized that **Jesus’ people, in their sorrow, can have a remembering problem, because they had a faith problem.** *Even though Messiah had told them that, like Jonah, he would not stay there beyond three days.* Even though the chief priests and Pharisees **remembered** and asked Pilate’s permission to seal the tomb. **God’s people, too full of sorrow, was empty of hope and anticipation.** John tells us that when Peter and John enter the tomb, they saw and believed. Jesus later addressed that issue head on, their issue of needing to see, in order to believe.

The Jews believed in life after death. But while they had seen Lazarus come from the tomb, they knew it was only a matter of time before he died again, his flesh to decay. What they believed was life after death *in spirit form!* Jesus was telling them all along about life after death with spirit and flesh once again joined. They were stuck in their old beliefs, while Jesus was teaching them a new understanding of belief. Sometimes, we have to let go and deepen our old beliefs to where he is taking us.

We still do that, **have a remembering problem that struggles with faith.** We act like Christian followers living without God's faithful promises, and instead, only the world's troubles and concerns. **Listen**, the world also remembers that *he said he would come again.* Look to what they are attempting to seal even now. Trying to seal this world from access to God. **But we are here to unseal their tombs and release them with God's good gospel news! Because Jesus had said that**

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18:18).

You already have his power through his Spirit, and his authority through his word to roll stones away and set captives free. Takes your spices and anointing oils and go. Stones have already been rolled away from before you.

The presence of the angels was testimony that the disappearance of Jesus's body was caused by divine and not human intervention.

Those linen cloths are intriguing. Until I think back to the Garden when a runaway couple—Adam and Eve—made *their own covering*, later removed by the hands of their God, and replaced by his own covering.

When Messiah was born, his mother's mortal hands had wrapped him in swaddling clothes.

And when they buried the Savior, again, mortal hands had wrapped a linen shroud around his body and covered his face with a cloth.

But when Jesus rose from his tomb, he neatly folded his human coverings, setting them aside.

The second Adam—the Great I AM— is clothed in his own righteousness.

He truly is YHWH-Tsidkenu—The LORD Our Righteousness.

He is Jehovah Mekadesh—The LORD Who Sanctifies You.

He will cloth *us* with **his righteousness.**

Colin Kruse in his commentary *John* said:

"Attentive readers will notice the difference between Lazarus' restoration to life and Jesus' resurrection. Lazarus emerged from the tomb still wrapped with strips of linen, and the cloth around his face, and he had to be released by others. (John 11: 44), whereas in the case of Jesus, the linen strips and burial cloth were simply left behind as he rose from the dead." [p. 439]

John tells us that as Mary stands weeping, she turns around and sees **Him!** She didn't know that it was Jesus, but thinks he is a gardener.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “**Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?**”

The One who had asked the fallen runaways in Eden, “*Adam, where are you*”, now asks at this tomb emptied of death, “*Whom are you looking for?*” Our running away days were over, as we now search for the God we love, running towards rather than away from Him.

And when he says her name, “Mary!” she finally recognizes him. **The Shepherd calls his sheep by name, and they know his voice, and go to him.**

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me” (John 10:27)

Imagine the shock and delight that word “Rabboni!” was uttered with. Her beloved teacher was standing in front of her...**ALIVE!**

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “*Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’*” (John 20:17)

Feet that had been heavy with sorrow as she trudged to the tomb, now flew with light-hearted speed to relay the good news of Messiah’s resurrection to the disciples. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “**I have seen the Lord,**” as she told them that he had said these things to her.

When Jesus tells her that he is ascending “*to my Father,*” he was pointing to the fact of his eternal nature as the only **Son of God**. **And when he added, “and your Father” he was reminding all of us of our new relationship as children of God by adoption.**

Hebrews 2:11 puts it this way:

“For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters...”

The Apostle John chronicled Mary Magdalene's movements in just a few verses (20:11-18), as she went from grief to joyous belief, is positioned near the cross at Jesus' death, then in front the open tomb, receiving the first resurrection appearance, and is commissioned to make the key announcement to the disciples.

There was a renewed determination by all the LORD’s disciples to follow the resurrected Jesus, just as they had followed him for three years throughout Israel and the Roman Decapolis.

The morning of his resurrection, they crept quickly and quietly to the tomb armed with spices, their love for Jesus exceeding their fear of Roman swords, their only fear an unmovable stone that turned out to be *an obstacle already removed.*

Their resilience became the spirit and character of all true disciples from that day. **The *ezers*, created by God to help and to save,** were a force to be reckoned with by the chief priests, Pharisees, Roman Rulers, and Centurions. Jesus had warned them that they would face many trials. But he had also promised that God’s presence and peace would travel with all who would pick up their cross and follow him. (*John 16:33, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23*)

On the first day of the week, while it was still dark, **an open but empty tomb was found**. Those who loved the Father, and his Son, rejoiced, and prepared. **We who are Jesus' new disciples** marvel at those first disciples, encouraged and committed to carry forward what they started...spreading the good news that Christ is alive... *and will return to rule the earth.*

When **it was evening**, disciples hiding behind locked doors discovered that it could not keep their Messiah out. God loves to be among his people. (Zephaniah 3:17) We saw that in the desert Tabernacle, and in the Temple Solomon built. Nothing about *that*—His desire to be with us—will ever change.

In Genesis we read, *“And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”* But now we read that, *“On the first day of the week, it was morning... and it was evening.”*

A new day.

Amen.