

I mentioned last week with chapter 20 we transition from our Savior's humiliation to His exaltation—chapter 19 ended with His burial, chapter 20 begins with His resurrection. I furthermore mentioned, the gospels mention Mary Magdalene quite frequently.

This is interesting, given the fact that little is actually known about her. We really only know three things: (1) our Savior delivered her from demon possession, (2) she followed Him throughout His ministry, and (3) she stayed near Him, both while on the cross and in the tomb.

In addition to these three, we learn this morning, she was the first person our Savior revealed Himself to, after His resurrection. Thus, we have in Mary Magdalene a beautiful example of Christian devotion, birthed from a deep sense of gratitude for salvation from sin and Satan.

- I. Mary and the Angels (vv11-13)
- II. Mary and her Lord (vv14-17)
- III. Mary and the Disciples (v18)

I. Mary and the Angels (vv11-13)

1. Verse 11, is obviously in contrast to v10—"Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping."
2. When Mary returned to the tomb we are not told—if you recall, we learned last week that she left the tomb to inform Peter and John the stone had been removed.
3. Peter and John ran to the tomb, and beholding the evidence, believe—that is, believe that Christ was raised from the dead.
4. From v10 we learn, they returned to the homes, but Mary remained by the tomb, because she was still uncertain about what had happened.
5. Mary was still under the impression, that someone had stolen the body and hidden Him in some unknown place.
6. This is the cause behind her sorrow—"But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb."
7. Seemingly, Mary had yet to look within the tomb, and now finally, her sorrow compels her to examine the tomb for herself.
8. V12—"And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."
9. (1) Their apparel—"she saw two angels in white"—this is to say, they likely appeared in human form in white garments.
10. Lk.24:4—"Two men stood by them in shining garments"—that is, earlier the same two angels appeared to the other women.
11. Now, at this point I have to admit that there exists a measure of mystery with regards to these created beings (called angels).
12. The term "angel" means "messenger" and Scripture teaches they were created by God to service Him as messengers.
13. Though they are spiritual beings they never the less can assume, at least the appearance of human form for a time.
14. They were dressed in white garments to underscore their native purity—they are perfectly pure without any sin.
15. (2) Their position—they were sitting at the head and feet of where the body of Jesus had lain—what is the significance of this?
16. Well, in the first place, it reminds us of the Mercy-seat, located on the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies.

17. If you remember, on both ends of the Mercy-seat there were cherubim, which were physical representations of angels.
18. Thus, the fact that these two angels are sitting on both ends where the body of Jesus had lain, underscores the fact that Christ's death was a propitiation for sin.
19. The body that laid there, was offered as a sacrifice for sin, and now, had been raised from the dead for our justification.
20. That is, the fact that the body has been raised from the dead means, that the sacrifice was sufficient to atone for sin.
21. (3) Their question, v13—"Then they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, ' Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.'"
22. Mary's response is very instructive—it underscores the reason for her sorrow—she thought Christ's body was taken.
23. Her sorrow was fueled by a misguided love for her Lord—His body was missing and she didn't know where He was.
24. Lesson 1—Love enables us to seek after a seemingly non-present Savior—Mary Magdalene was overtaken with love.
25. Most of the older commentators have seen in Mary a very beautiful example of great love and devotion for Christ.
26. Martin Luther—"We are not so pious as this Mary Magdalene, for there is no one among us who loves Christ as much and has such a fervent, ardent heart toward Him as she had."
27. Robert Rollock—"There is no man that can express sufficiently this love that she hath to Christ. No, we would be well if we could love Him half as much as she did."
28. But the lesson that I'm here suggesting isn't merely about Mary's love for Christ, but how it drove her to find Him.
29. She's a woman all by herself—she wasn't afraid of the angels—and she intended to carry a dead man's body (prepared with a hundred pounds of spices).
30. In other words—this is an active love—a love that drives a person to seek after the very object of our affection.
31. This is a love that is personal and powerful—"they have taken away my Lord"—not merely "the Lord" but "my Lord."
32. The love that drove Mary was personal—she knew that the Lord was hers and she knew that she belonged to Him.
33. Lesson 2—Ignorance and unbelief are often the cause of needless sorrow—though Mary's sorrow was understandable, it was unnecessary.
34. And the reason for her unnecessary sorrow was ignorance and unbelief—she simply failed to understand and/or believe the truth.
35. Our Savior had repeatedly taught His disciples the necessity of His death and the certainty of His resurrection.
36. The fact is—Mary would have had cause to weep if she found His body still in the grave, but not because it was gone.
37. Dear brethren, how often are we similar to Mary—we weep and sorrow because we fail to understand the truth.
38. J.C. Ryle—"Two-thirds of the things we fear in life never happen at all, and two-thirds of the tears we shed are thrown away, and shed in vain. Let us pray for more faith and patience, and allow more time for the development of God's purposes: let us believe that things are often working for our peace and joy, which seem at one time to contain nothing but bitterness and sorrow."
39. Lesson 3—The Lord, through angels, watches over His sorrowful and often ignorant people—we must remember, angels are servants of God.
40. It was God who sent the angels to console and comfort Mary, thus, they were expressions of God's care for her.
41. Ps.91:11—"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways" Heb.1:14—"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

42. Thus, when we think of angels we must think of the Lord, for they are but His servants sent to perform His bidding.
43. This of course is often a problem when it comes to angels—people love to discuss them but forget about their Lord.
44. Richard Phillips—"How striking it is that on the morning of His victory over cosmic powers of evil, Jesus has full attention for the hurts of a precious disciple."

## II. Mary and her Lord (vv14-17)

1. Let me summarize Mary's interaction with her Lord under three sub-headings—He conceals Himself, reveals Himself, instructs Mary.
2. (1) He conceals Himself, vv14-15—"Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.'"
3. Obviously, our Savior somehow concealed His true identity from Mary, and this in one of two ways—He either disguised Himself, or else, He hindered her vision.
4. She confusedly thought He was the gardener, because if you remember, our Savior's tomb was located in a garden.
5. This isn't the only time that Christ concealed Himself to His disciples, as He appeared to them after His resurrection.
6. Lk.24:13—"Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus...So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him (v31—"Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight')."
7. Thus, in this instance it appears—our Savior concealed His identity from them by hindering their vision of Him.
8. Now, the important question becomes, not how did He conceal Himself, but WHY—Why did He conceal Himself, for a time, from Mary?
9. Well, I suggest the rather obvious answer is this—To excite or kindle within Mary, the grace of faith that had grown cold.
10. This is not only true of Mary, but also the two disciples traveling to Emmaus—they were all downcast because of the weakness of their faith.
11. Thus, our Savior concealed Himself from them, for a time, to rekindle within them their faith that had almost gone out.
12. (2) He reveals Himself, v16—"Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him, 'Raboni!' (which is to say, Teacher)."
13. The word "Raboni" is Aramaic for "teacher" from which we have the word "rabbi"—it's a rather common term.
14. It's obviously that Mary uses it in a very affectionate way. Christ was her Teacher, in the sense that she was His disciple.
15. Rabbis or teachers had disciples who followed them everywhere and learned from their lives as well as instruction.
16. This is what a Christian disciple is—a follower of Christ—someone who walks with Christ and follows His example and teaching.
17. For Mary, as well as the other disciples, this meant that they literally walked with Him, lived with Him, and followed Him.
18. Thus, when our Savior said, "Follow Me," He meant that people were to literally follow Him as their Teacher (Rabbi).
19. And so when Mary refers to Christ as "Raboni" she meant it submissively but also affectionately—He was her Teacher.

20. (3) He instructs Mary, v17—"Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"
21. Now, the first thing that I have to say in coming to v17 is, admittedly there are some things difficult to understand.
22. Not every Christian has understood this passage in the same exact way—Why does our Savior forbid Mary to cling to Him? What does ascending to the Father have to do with it? Why does He say "My Father and your Father (and not merely our Father)?"
23. Well, I suggest the answer is largely found in what I suggested last week, and that is, in Christ's resurrection there's the beginning of something new.
24. V17—"Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father."
25. Though He speaks of His ascension as imminent, He would not ascend to the Father until 40 days later (just prior to the Day of Pentecost).
26. Most of us likely give too little significance to the ascension, as it's a vital part of our Savior's historical work.
27. Simply put—the ascension refers to Christ's bodily return to heaven, where He intercedes for us at His Father's right hand.
28. Thus, it's from this position of authority and glory, that our Savior now applies the salvation He previously purchased.
29. It's for this reason, He sends the Holy Spirit after He ascends to heaven, as it's the Spirit who applies salvation.
30. It's for this reason our Savior earlier spoke about the need for Him to depart, if the Spirit would be sent to them.
31. Furthermore, He often described this event as beneficial to His people, as it would bring forth a wonderful new era.
32. (a) A new relationship with Christ—"Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father"—the implication is, Mary was physically clinging to Him.
33. And so, the issue is not that she was hindering Him from leaving, but she was still thinking in terms of the physical.
34. Up to this point, the relationship that Mary and the other disciples had with Christ, had a physical aspect to it.
35. And what our Savior is now telling Mary is—after His resurrection this would change, as He would be returning to the Father.
36. That is, He would no longer be among them physically or bodily—He would be with them through His Spirit.
37. Thus, the main cause of our Savior's subtle rebuke, was that Mary was making too much out of His bodily presence.
38. Mary, like the other disciples, had to learn how to live by faith not sight—He would now be with them spiritually.
39. (b) A new relationship with the Father—"go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."
40. Notice what our Savior did not say—He did not say—I am ascending to our Father and our God, but instead He makes an important distinction.
41. Christ has a unique relation to God the Father—the Father is His Father and His God in unique ways and senses.
42. Remember, Christ is two natures in one Person—thus, as God the Father is His Father by way of eternal generation and as Man, God is His God by way of covenant—or put another way—as the GodMan He is uniquely related to God the Father.
43. It's through Christ that we as Christians have God as our God and Father—He is first the God and Father of Christ, and then secondly, the God and Father of saints.
44. Oh brethren, what a beautiful truth is found here—it's because of Christ that we now have God to be our Father.

45. Surely, we have to all confess that we often fail to ponder this great truth—the God of the universe is our Father.
46. But notice, He doesn't cease being our God—He is our Father and He is our God—He is God our Father in Christ.
47. (c) A new relationship with each other—"go to My brethren and say to them"—He now refers to them as His brethren.
48. In Christ's ascension and gift of the Holy Spirit, we have the formal beginning of the church and/or family of God.
49. This is why He forbid Mary to cling to Him—she failed to perceive the big picture—she was still thinking in terms of a few disciples having His physical presence in Jerusalem.
50. But instead, our Savior is about to ascend to heaven, and then He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (people of every nation).
51. And He would transform these people into a single family—they would be His Spiritual family—His brethren.
52. Lesson 1—Christ for a time may hide Himself from His people—that is, He may hide the sense of His presence.
53. Ps.10:1—"Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble? 13:1—"How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me." 88:14—"LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?"
54. Now, in the first place, we must not misunderstand these texts to mean, He literally hides Himself from us (so as to not see us).
55. The Lord has promised never to leave nor forsake us—it's not that He actually hides from us, but He may hide the sense of His presence for a time.
56. Why does He do this, but to cause us to seek after Him—to awaken us from our dullness and strengthen faith in us.
57. John Owen—"He withdraws Himself in order to make us appreciate Him more so that we diligently seek for Him as we would seek for a lost precious treasure. We all too easily take Christ for granted and become lazy in seeking fellowship with Him...By withdrawing Himself He aims to awaken His people to search for Him, and to mourn over their sin of taking Him for granted...While we are busy with other things, Christ withdraws Himself and we cannot find Him. Yet even this discipline is for our recovery and sanctification."
58. Song 5—(a) Her reluctance (vv2-3)—(b) His departure (v6a)—(c) Her pursuit (vv6b-8)—He hide Himself for the purpose of awakening her from her slumber.
59. For example, I remember once when the girls were real young and they would often stray away at the grocery store.
60. The twins were 4 or 5 years old, and walking in front of me holding hands—I warned them several times about getting too ahead of me to no avail.
61. Finally, I ducked behind something, hidden from their view—they continued on for a few minutes before noticing I was gone.
62. Immediately, they became fearful and started to cry, calling for me and seeking after me—all the while I was watching them.
63. This is what Christ does for a time—though we may not see Him and think He's missing, He's actually present watching us.
64. Lesson 2—Christ knows, loves, and cares for His people by name—though Mary was hindered from seeing Him, she heard His voice.
65. It's important to notice, that in calling her by name, Mary now clearly understood who this Man was before her.
66. Perhaps we can say—when our Savior speaks specifically to His elect sheep by name, they always hear His voice.
67. Jn.10:27—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"—Christ knows His sheep by name.
68. But Christ doesn't merely call His people by name once—He calls them each by name throughout their lives.

69. When we are wayward, He calls us firmly but gently by name—when we are downcast, He calls us sweetly by name.
70. Lesson 3—Christ as the GodMan, has opened a way for man back to God—what a glorious lesson this passage teaches us.
71. Christ shed His blood was raised from the dead, and then returned to the Father to make atonement for our sins.
72. Perhaps we can put it this way—He died and rose again, so that, He can open the gate back to fellowship with God.
73. Oh my dear friend, Christ has opened the gate to God—who can open the gate to God for man, but the GodMan.

### III. Mary and the Disciples (v18)

1. V18—"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."
2. There is a sense in which Mary Magdalene was the first missionary sent by the resurrected and glorified Christ.
3. She was sent to deliver an important message to the other disciples—in short, He is alive and returning to His Father.
4. Oh dear brethren, we find in v18, both the qualifications for a missionary, as well as their fundamental message.
5. The qualification for being a missionary is that you've seen the Lord—but physically or bodily—but spiritually and truly.
6. You have come to know yourself as a guilty sinner, and you've come to see that Christ is a glorious and powerful Savior.
7. And what are missionaries to tell others? They must tell them that the Lord was crucified, raised from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of God on high!