

Called to Support

Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18

SS Lesson for 02/14/2021

Devotional Scripture: Acts 9:36-42

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Luke 8:1-2

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

SUPPORT THROUGH PROVISIONS (LUKE 8:1-3)

Provisions because of being their leader (1)

Support leaders because of consideration of their works (Heb 13:7)

Support leaders because they deserve it (1 Cor 9:11-12)

Support leaders because it will be credited to our spiritual account (Phil 4:17-18)

Support leaders because there is a reward for doing so (Matt 10:41-42)

Provisions because of receiving healings (2)

Healing should result in never forgetting God's benefits (Ps 103:1-3)

Healing should result in providing praises to God for His unfailing love (Ps 107:20-21)

Healing should result in providing praises to God because it is appropriate and right (Luke 17:15-18)

Healing should result in providing praises to God because it inspires others to praise Him too (Luke 18:42-43)

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Giving through sharing all good things with leaders (Gal 6:6)

Giving through welcoming and honoring leaders (Phil 2:29-30)

Giving through rewarding the service rendered by leaders (2 Tim 2:6)

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Humility because it leads to justification (Luke 18:13-14)

Humility because it is a part of submission to God (James 4:7-8)

Humility because it is a prerequisite of being lifted up by God (1 Peter 5:5-6)

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CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

Jesus' First Appearance: Mary Magdalene (20:10-18)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Jesus became well known in the Jewish villages and towns of Galilee by traveling among the people. Peter described this by saying Jesus “went around doing good” (Acts 10:38), a ministry that included teaching, healing, and casting out demons (see Mark 1:14-15, 34). Jesus traveled with a large group that included the core 12 disciples and others. The opportunity for women to play a prominent role in Jesus’ ministry made it unusual. Jerusalem had no famous women rabbis. The Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin, had no female members. The prominent sects, the Sadducees and Pharisees, were made up of men only. The inclusion of women who were not the wives or other family of the disciples was even more unusual (compare 1 Corinthians 9:5). Many charges were made against Jesus during his ministry, including drunkenness, Sabbath breaking, blasphemy, and using the power of Satan (see Mark 3:22-23; Luke 7:34; John 5:18; etc.). Because women traveled with them regularly, we might expect similar charges regarding sexual sins. But no record claims that either Jesus or any of his disciples (male or female) were accused of sexual immorality while they ministered together. Mary Magdalene was one of these women. She has been especially misunderstood throughout history. Some factions have tried to uncover a romantic entanglement between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. These stories are found only in sources written long after the first century. For example, a second- or third-century nonbiblical collection of sayings called The Gospel of Philip presents Mary Magdalene as Jesus’ “companion.” The Gospel of Mary, another heretical document, claims that Jesus revealed special, secret knowledge to Mary alone. Other fanciful legends claim that Mary traveled from Jerusalem after the crucifixion to the south of France. Medieval accounts sometimes included Mary in the legends concerning the Holy Grail—the cup Jesus supposedly used at the last supper and that supposedly was used to collect some of his blood at the cross. Yet the actual biblical accounts about Mary Magdalene are sparse on details and have none of these legendary elements. Her real witness is even greater than those!

Key Verse: Luke 8:1-2

I Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

20:1-2. The first day of the week, Sunday, Mary of Magdala and other women (cf. **we** in v. 2) came to **the tomb**. “Mary of Magdala” is a translation of the same Greek words which elsewhere are rendered “Mary Magdalene” (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1, 9; Luke 24:10). Her devotion to Jesus, living and dead, was based on her gratitude for His delivering her from bondage to Satan. She had been an observer at the cross and now was the first person at the grave. This tomb had been closed with a large rock door (Mark 16:3-4) and had been sealed by the authority of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:65-66). The women were amazed to see an open and apparently empty tomb. They ran and told **Peter and the beloved disciple** (cf. John 19:26) that a terrible thing had occurred. They assumed that grave robbers had desecrated the tomb.

20:3-9. Peter and John started a footrace to **the tomb**. John beat Peter to the garden and looked in **the tomb**. It was not quite empty for John saw the grave clothes. Perhaps his first thought was that the women had made a mistake! **He bent over and looked (blepei) in** but **did not** enter the tomb, probably for fear of defilement. When **Peter... arrived** he rushed in and **saw (theōrei, “beheld attentively”)** the grave clothes and the **separate burial cloth**. He must have remained inside puzzled at what he saw. After a period of time John **went in and saw (eiden, “perceived”)**—the third Gr. word for “see” in these verses) the significance of the grave clothes **and believed**. Peter must have been thinking, “Why would a grave robber have left the clothes in this order? Why take the body of Jesus?” But John perceived that the missing body and the position of the grave clothes was not due to a robbery. He realized that Jesus had risen from the dead and had gone through the grave clothes. The tomb was open not to let Jesus’ body out but to let the disciples

and the world see that He rose. This section of John's Gospel (20:1-9) is a powerful eyewitness testimony which strikes the perceptive reader as being psychologically and historically true. John commented (v. 9) that even after a long period of teaching by Jesus the disciples **still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead** (cf. Pss. 16:10-11; 110:1, 4; Isa. 53:11-12).

20:10-14. Jesus' first resurrection appearance was to **Mary** of Magdala, out of whom He had cast seven demons (Luke 8:2). (For a list of His resurrection appearances see Matt. 28.) **The disciples returned to their homes** while Mary remained **outside the tomb crying**. John must not have yet told her that Jesus was risen. He probably was too stunned and puzzled to say anything significant. Mary looked **into the tomb and saw two** individuals who were **angels**. In the Bible when angels appeared to people, the angels looked like men; they did not have halos or wings. In certain visions, winged beings appeared (e.g., Isa. 6) but the norm for angels was that they were in human-like forms. Because of her grief Mary did not notice anything unusual. Their question and her answer set the stage for the greatest "recognition scene" in all of history (perhaps the second greatest is "I am Joseph"; cf. Gen. 45:1-3). The appearance of **Jesus** to Mary was so unexpected that **she did not realize that it was Jesus**. The fact that He appeared to Mary rather than to Pilate or Caiaphas or to one of His disciples is significant. That a woman would be the first to see Him is an evidence of Jesus' electing love as well as a mark of the narrative's historicity. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have invented a story with a woman as the first witness to this most important event. Furthermore, Jesus may have introduced Himself to Mary first because she had so earnestly sought Him. She was at the cross while He was dying (John 19:25), and she went to His tomb early on Sunday morning (20:1).

20:15-16. Mary talked with Jesus but still did not realize who He was. Some suggest that Jesus' appearance was changed; others say she had a temporary "blindness" as did the Emmaus Road disciples who "were kept from recognizing Him" (Luke 24:16) until His act of disclosure. Others say that possibly the tears in her eyes kept her from recognizing Him. **Jesus said to her, Mary**. As the Good Shepherd, He calls His sheep by name (cf. John 10:3) and "they know His voice" (10:4). Immediately she recognized Him! She responded with the cry **Rabboni!** (**which means my Teacher**)

20:17-18. She may have embraced Him physically, for the Lord responded, **Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them....** These words spoke of a new relationship, new relatives, and a new responsibility. Many wanted to "hold onto" Jesus. The KJV translation "Touch Me not," has caused many interpreters to wonder why He could not be "touched." The NIV translation is more accurate, for He certainly was not untouchable (cf. Matt. 28:9; John 20:27). Mary had lost Jesus once before (at His crucifixion) and it was natural to fear the loss of His presence again. Jesus said, in effect, "This (the physical contact) is not My real presence for the church. A *new relationship* will begin with My Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church." Jesus then explained the fact of the *new relatives*. He called His disciples His brothers. Earlier He had said they were friends: "I no longer call you servants... instead, I have called you friends" (15:15). Believers in Jesus become a part of Jesus' family with God as their Father (cf. Heb. 2:11-12; Rom. 8:15-17, 29; Gal. 3:26). Mary's *new responsibility* was to testify to His risen presence. She was the recipient of four special graces: to see angels; to see Jesus risen; to be the first to see Him alive; and to be a proclaimer of the good news. Christians today are also the recipients of special grace; they too are given this new responsibility to witness to the world (cf. Matt. 28:16-20). Jesus' words, **I am returning to My Father** indicate His unique sonship. **Mary** and the other women told **the news to the disciples**, but according to Luke, they did not believe her or the other women "because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11; cf. Luke 24:23).

20:19-20. **The disciples** had almost been arrested with Jesus. They remained under the **fear of death** at the hands of **the Jews** (i.e., the Jewish authorities), so they met in secret at night, with fear, behind locked doors. (What a contrast with their boldness about seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost!) **Jesus** passed through the door, as indicated by the fact that when the **doors were locked, He came and stood among them** (cf. v. 26). This showed the power of His new resurrection body. But His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body (cf. v. 27). His first words, **Peace be with you!** were a conventional greeting similar to *šālôm* in Hebrew. But the words were now invested with a deeper and fuller meaning (cf. 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7). Seeing the wounds in **His pierced hands and side**, they **were overjoyed** (though at first they were frightened, as Luke stated [Luke 24:37-44]). What a change from their fear and despondency!

20:21-23. Jesus then recommissioned the disciples as His apostles: He was **sending** them as His representatives, **as the Father had sent Him** (cf. 17:18). They were sent with His authority to preach, teach, and do miraculous signs (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-49). For their new commission they needed

spiritual power. So **He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.** The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God's creative work in making Adam (Gen. 2:7). Now this post-Resurrection "breathing" was a new kind of creative work for they would soon become new creations (Eph. 2:8-10). This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later. Forgiveness of sins is one of the major benefits of the death of Jesus. It is the essence of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31-34). Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven's terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus' sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is **not forgiven.**

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Support through Provisions (Luke 8:1-3)

1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him,
2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities — Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,
3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Provisions because of being their leader (1)

Support leaders because of consideration of their works (Heb 13:7)

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Support leaders because they deserve it (1 Cor 9:11-12)

11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

Support leaders because it will be credited to our spiritual account (Phil 4:17-18)

17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Support leaders because there is a reward for doing so (Matt 10:41-42)

41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Provisions because of receiving healings (2)

Healing should result in never forgetting God's benefits (Ps 103:1-3)

1 Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. 2 Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

Healing should result in providing praises to God for His unfailing love (Ps 107:20-21)

20 He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. 21 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.

Healing should result in providing praises to God because it is appropriate and right (Luke 17:15-18)

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him — and he was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

Healing should result in providing praises to God because it inspires others to praise Him too (Luke 18:42-43)

42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." 43 Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Provisions through giving (3)

Giving through the sharing of the benefits (1 Cor 9:7-11)

7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? 8 Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?

Giving through sharing all good things with leaders (Gal 6:6)

6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Giving through welcoming and honoring leaders (Phil 2:29-30)

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Giving through rewarding the service rendered by leaders (2 Tim 2:6)

6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

Support through Following Jesus (Mark 15:40)

40 There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joseph, and Salome,

Following humbly (40)

Humility because it is a blessing (Matt 5:3)

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Humility because it leads to justification (Luke 18:13-14)

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Humility because it is a part of submission to God (James 4:7-8)

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Humility because it is a prerequisite of being lifted up by God (1 Peter 5:5-6)

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Following by serving (40-41)

Serving by pressing on toward the goal God has set for us (Phil 3:14)

14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Serving by doing God's will (Heb 10:36)

36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Serving by finishing the work God has assigned us (John 4:34)

34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Serving by doing good works (Eph 2:10)

10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Support through Seeking (John 20:10-18)

10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.

12 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.

13 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."

14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

17 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.'"

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

Seeking in wrong places (10-13)

Seeking in the wrong places like seeking for a human king (Matt 2:1-2)

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Seeking in the wrong places such as checking for Jesus in every child (Matt 2:16)

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

Seeking in the wrong places without the aid of the Holy Spirit (John 5:38-40)

38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. 39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Seeking in the wrong places instead of seeking to be of service to God (Luke 2:46-50)

46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." 49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Seeking without recognizing when found (14-15)

Not recognizing Jesus until He opens our eyes (Luke 24:30-32)

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Not recognizing Jesus until He works a miracle in our lives (John 21:4-7)

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. 5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. 6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. 7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

Not recognizing Jesus but knowing that someone is working in our lives (John 9:17-25)

17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." 18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" 20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

Seeking earnestly results in finding Jesus (16-17)

Finding Jesus while He is near (Isa 55:6-7)

6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Finding Jesus because He has already found us (Isa 65:1)

65 "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'

Finding Jesus by knocking and having the door opened (Matt 7:7-8)

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Finding Jesus by waiting and listening for Him (Prov 8:34-35)

34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. 35 For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord.

Seeking to tell others about finding Jesus (18)

Witness to others because Jesus commanded it (Matt 28:18-20)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Witness to others through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Witness to others through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Witness starts at home (Luke 8:39)

39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Jesus' First Appearance: Mary Magdalene (20:10-18)

10 So the disciples went back to their homes. 11 But Mary stood outside the tomb and wept. While she was weeping, she bent over and looked into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus' body had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Mary replied, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!" 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you seeking for?" Because she thought he was the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus replied, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene came and informed the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what Jesus had said to her.

It was Mary Magdalene who first arrived at the empty tomb in the early hours of the first day of the week. When she saw the stone had been removed, she seems to have jumped to a hasty conclusion—someone had taken the body. We do not know to whom the **"they"** (**"They have taken the Lord from the tomb ..."**—verse 2) refers, and I doubt that Mary did either. I believe it is safe to say that it never occurred to her that any of the disciples took the body. She seems to have assumed it was either the Jews, or the Roman soldiers, or someone like **"the gardener"** (see 20:15). It never occurred to Mary that Jesus had been raised from the dead. She did not hope to see her risen Lord; she simply wished to locate His body and give it a proper burial.

A year or so ago a young woman's body was stolen from its grave at Restland Cemetery, just a mile or so down the road from our church. It was a terrible thing to do, and the family was most eager to get the body back and see to it that it was buried properly, once for all. Someone had added insult to injury. Not only had this family lost a loved one, they suffered the agony of not knowing what had become of her body. Mary must have felt the same way this young woman's family felt. She had devoted herself and her livelihood to following Jesus and supporting Him, along with some other women. She had watched helplessly as Jesus was tried, convicted, and crucified. She looked on as His body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Now, she believed that the body of her Lord had been taken. It was almost too much to bear.

When Peter and John left the tomb, Mary remained behind. At first she stood outside the tomb, weeping. She stooped sufficiently to be able to see inside the tomb, apparently for the first time. Two angels were inside, clothed in white. An angel was sitting at each end of the place where Jesus' body had been laid. From Mary's

response to these angels, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that Mary did not recognize these angels as angels. But then why should she? It is true that in Matthew's account the one angel who sat on the stone had an appearance that was like lightening (28:3), and this fellow was so awesome the guards were terrified (28:4). But John does not tell us that these two angels were as awesome in appearance as the first angel was. And this should come as no surprise. Often in the Bible, angels simply look like men, so that their appearance alone would not reveal their true identity (see Genesis 18 and 19; Acts 1:10-11; Hebrews 13:2). It would seem that the two angels made no effort to identify themselves as angels, nor even to inform Mary that Jesus was not there. Perhaps it was because our Lord was going to do this personally.

The angels asked Mary, "**Woman, why are you weeping?**" The inference is that her tears were not really called for. They were tears of love, and of sorrow, but they were also ill-founded. In Mary's mind, this was the darkest moment of her life, and yet her tears were based upon false assumptions: that Jesus was dead; that His body had been stolen; that she would not be able to find His body. If Mary had known the real reason why the tomb was empty, she would not have been crying.

Some have suggested that the angels gave a look of recognition when they saw Jesus behind Mary, outside the tomb. We do not know why, but for some reason Mary turned around to gaze at the risen Lord. She saw Him, but she did not recognize Him, in much the same way that I had seen Sally Rackets in the parking lot this past week, but did not recognize her. Mary's vision may have been obscured by her tears, and Jesus may not have looked exactly the same as He did before His resurrection. He most certainly looked different from the way she saw Him last, from the horrible sight she could not erase from her mind—a badly beaten, bloody figure, who could hardly be recognized for all the abuse His body had taken: "Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness" (Isaiah 52:15, NIV).

Jesus asks Mary the same question the angels had asked her moments earlier: "**Woman, why are you weeping?**", but He adds a further question, "**Who are you Seeking for?**". Jesus knew why she was weeping. He knew that the empty tomb caused her great grief. He knew that she was seeking His body. His words indicate to Mary that He knows something about her dilemma. Mary's grief still blinds her to the truth, but she nevertheless seems to discern that this "**gardener**" holds the key to her quest for the Lord's body. She pleads with Him to convey any information He may have to her: "**Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him**" (verse 15).

Jesus answered with but one word—"Mary." For Mary, seeing was not believing, but hearing was. Would you not love to have heard this one word just the way Mary did? That one word was spoken in the voice she knew so well. It was also spoken in the manner she knew so well. What love, what compassion, what healing was conveyed by this one word—"Mary." I cannot help but recall the words of our Lord, spoken earlier:

1 "I tell you the solemn truth, the one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him **because they recognize his voice**. 5 They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice" (John 10:1-5, emphasis mine).

Immediately Mary recognized that it was her Lord, and called Him "**Rabboni**" (or teacher). We know from our Lord's words that Mary has already locked Him in her grasp. It is as though she intended to keep holding on to Him, so that He would never leave her again. And it is because of this that Jesus responds, "**Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'**" (John 20:17, NAB). I must differ with the NET Bible translation here ("**Do not touch me, ...**") for two reasons. First, it is not that Jesus could not be touched. In but a few verses we will read, "**Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe'**" (John 20:27). Why would Jesus tell Mary not to touch Him, and instruct Thomas to do so? In Matthew 28:9, Jesus allowed the women to take hold of His feet and worship Him. Second, the tense of the imperative is present, and this grammatical construction often conveys the thought of ceasing to do something. Jesus is not trying to prevent Mary from touching Him; He is trying to make it clear to her that He is going to leave this world to return to His Father. She should not suppose that by clinging to Him she can prevent His departure.

John does not include the command which Jesus gave to Mary, though it is clear that He instructed her as to what she was to tell the disciples (20:18). She who was the first to go out to the tomb was the first to see the risen Lord, and apparently the first to be privileged to share the good news of His resurrection with others.

Before we go on to the next appearance of our Lord, I would like to make a comment or two. I would like you to note that our Lord's first appearance is not to one of the eleven disciples, but to Mary Magdalene. She will never be one of the apostles. She will never write a Gospel. She will never become a great preacher or leader. Nevertheless, our Lord chose to manifest Himself to her first. Why do you think this was? I would call your attention to three important factors. First, she had a great love for her Master, as He did for her. Second, she seemed to be the one with the greatest measure of grief. I am reminded of the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount: "**Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted**" (Matthew 5:4). In the context of this sermon, Jesus did not promise blessings to those who were the greatest, or the most powerful, but to those in the greatest need, with the greatest desire for spiritual things. There is a third reason: Mary was there first. Jesus revealed Himself first to the one who was there first. Mary came to the tomb early, because of her great love, and her great grief, and Jesus revealed Himself to her, first.

I would also like to point out an important lesson which this text teaches us: When we come to see things as they really are, we will find that many of our tears were unnecessary. To put it in different words, Many of our tears are ill-founded. Both the angels and our Lord questioned Mary as to why she was weeping. The reason she gave was that her Lord's body had been taken, and she did not know where to find it. The truth of the matter was that Jesus was not dead; He had been resurrected. And beyond this, His body was not missing at all, and no one had taken it. Jesus did not need to be found by Mary; Jesus found Mary.

We know that in heaven there will be no more tears: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more—or mourning, or crying, or pain; the former things have ceased to exist" (Revelation 21:4). Why will there be no more tears in heaven? The first answer is because there will no longer be those things which cause us to cry—no more suffering, no more sin, no more injustice, no more death. But the second reason is that we shall then see all of our sorrows in an entirely different light. We shall see them in the context of the perfect work God was achieving through the things which caused us to weep.

When you and I get to heaven, we will see things in a very different light, and when we do, we will discover that many of our tears of sorrow were as groundless as Mary's tears were. I am not saying that Christians should not cry. What I am saying is that a good deal of our sorrow is the result of our inadequate knowledge of what God is doing in and through our adversities. When Christians get to heaven, they will see the entire picture, and thus they will find that everything that has ever happened to them is for their good and His glory. No wonder there will be no tears in heaven! Our comfort and joy may not come as quickly as Mary's did, but it will be just as great, just as real, and it is just as certain.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We often portray nonbelievers who come to church as "seekers"; we say that those who seek Jesus will find him. In today's story, Mary Magdalene, a firm disciple and believer, was a seeker in a different sense: she sought Jesus' body and was not easily dissuaded from her quest. But that quest was mistaken, for there was no longer a dead body. Try as she might, Mary did not find Jesus. He found her. Jesus had first found Mary to deliver her from demonization. He then found her weeping in a tomb, a woman for whom the recent days had been a dark nightmare. Isaiah promised, "[God] will come to save you" (Isaiah 35:4). As it was with Mary, so it is with us: If we seek Jesus but don't find him, it may be because our search is based on a mistaken idea. We clear up any mistakes by reading the facts of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension in the Bible. That's where hearing his call starts.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Luke specifically named women who followed Jesus and provided for the needs of Him and His disciples. Jewish men failed to highly esteem women in Jesus' day. A husband or father could ignore them or treat them harshly. But Jesus paid attention to women as well as men and ministered to their deepest needs. Think of the woman with the hemorrhage of blood (Mark 5:25-34), the Syrophenician woman and her daughter (7:24-30), and the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), for example.

Women Following Jesus - Mary Magdalene's conversion story is a great example of God's care. Demons possessed her body until Jesus set her free (Luke 8:2). Another follower of Jesus was Joanna, the wife of one of the stewards for Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. She would have been from the upper class of that day. It's surprising to see two women from such different backgrounds joining hands to follow Jesus. Mark also mentioned several women who wholeheartedly supported Jesus: Mary, Jesus' mother; Mary, mother of James and Joses; and Salome (Mark 15:40).

Women at the Tomb - Women were the first ones to discover the Resurrection when they went to the tomb to wrap Jesus' body with spices after His crucifixion. They hadn't expected an empty tomb. Mary Magdalene stood outside the tomb, heartbroken, weeping, figuring His body had been stolen, but then she saw two angels in the tomb who asked, "Why are you crying?" She explained that she thought others had taken His body and she didn't know where.

Jesus Called Mary's Name - Then Mary turned around, and there stood Jesus, though at first she did not recognize His resurrected body and assumed Him to be a gardener. But Jesus called her name, and she knew—it's Jesus! He commissioned her to go and tell the other disciples about His resurrection.

The Shepherd Knows Every Name - God knows everyone by name because we are His sheep. Like a little lamb, God's children are allowed to curl up in the Shepherd's lap, experience His love, and listen to His voice tenderly calling your name. Out of this abundance of compassion, believers tell their stories and spread His Gospel.