

Mary

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now to the chapter that we read, John chapter 20 and I would like to look for a few moments at part of verse 16 where it says there, Jesus saith unto her, Mary. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. We read today of the first appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ after the resurrection, after Calvary, after he had been crucified on the cross of Calvary, after he was buried, after his tomb was sealed by the authorities and after he rose from the dead. We read that he appeared again and the first person he appeared to was not to any of his disciples, not to Peter, not to James, not to John who were of the inner cabinet of his disciples, but first of all to Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene is the New Testament example of where sin did abound, grace did superabound. Because you know how we have in the Old Testament Manasseh as the example of probably the greatest sinner that ever was, a man who did everything in order to sin and wave his defiant face to the heavens. Manasseh made the streets of Jerusalem run with innocent blood and yet Manasseh was saved. So we have Mary Magdalene in the New

Testament. And what tremendous encouragement it is to those who in their own minds are great sinners. Those who have made a mess of their lives. Those who have wandered far from the paths of righteousness, who have gone a long, long way from what they ought to be.

To find here in Mary Magdalene someone who is just as bad as them. Because she wasn't an ordinary sinner at all. Mary Magdalene was somebody who was possessed with seven devils. Now we're not sure if that was seven exactly or whether it was a number that was taken. But all we know is that she was possessed by seven devils.

Which means that she was completely taken over by Satan and his angels. It wasn't a case of just sinning now and again and being held back by her own conscience and things like that. She was completely demon-possessed.

And a demon-possessed person does not call to Jesus. A demon-possessed person, rather the reverse, asks Jesus to stay away. And there's no record in the Bible at all of a demon-possessed person calling out to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 40] But we have this on record for us. Mary Magdalene, possessed by seven devils, was sought out and found by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Was freed from the bondage of devil possession and that amongst all the disciples and all the people that he could have come back to, those that were followers of his, he chose to meet with her first after the resurrection.

Mary Magdalene was born in a little village. There was only about 14 houses in the village. And it's on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. A little village called Magdala.

It was a village that was near Capernaum, near Chorazin and Bethsaida. And as the very names tell us, it was a very, very privileged area.

Because it was here that the Lord Jesus Christ himself labored. That he worked, that he preached, that he taught, that he performed miracles, that he went about doing good.

[3 : 43] And it was there on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, near Magdala, that he called his own disciples. That he chose his twelve people. But the village of Magdala remained a curious mixture of good and evil.

It never really accepted the Lord at all, although there were one or two good things about him. Now we're not told about when the Lord Jesus met with Mary Magdalene, first of all, at all.

We're not told about how he set her free from the seven devils. But she's referred to in the Gospels, in both Mark and in Luke, as Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

She was referred to as the person out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils. But from the very moment that she is freed of those devils, from the very moment that Jesus came into her life and freed her from these devils, we find that Mary Magdalene is determined, never again, to lose sight of Jesus.

Jesus himself must have given her permission to follow him. Because Jesus didn't give permission to everybody to follow him at all.

[4 : 50] Because remember, the man in the garden, the man who was the demonic man from Gadara, he wasn't allowed to follow Jesus at all. Although he asked that he would be allowed to follow Jesus, permission was refused.

And then remember the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried his feet with her hair and anointed him. She was dismissed with a blessing.

She wasn't allowed to follow him either. But among all the men and women that believed in Jesus, there is nobody that equals Mary Magdalene in her singular purpose and desire to follow Jesus whithersoever he went.

You remember Mary, the sister of Martha and the sister of Lazarus, that she was commended for what she did. Jesus himself commended her. But we read that she sat at the feet of Jesus, but she only seemed to do that while Jesus was in the house.

Jesus, she didn't follow the same way that Mary Magdalene did at all. And then Mary, the mother of Jesus, the very mother of Jesus, who was blessed amongst women because she believed when the angel told her that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah.

[6 : 05] She didn't follow with the same tenacity, with the same keenness as Mary Magdalene at all. Neither of them are named amongst the constant attendance on Christ.

Christ's ministry. And yet Mary Magdalene is the one that follows Jesus more closely than any, even of his own disciples.

She wasn't called to the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember when Jesus was transfigured. She wasn't called to be there at all to see the glory of Christ. Nor was she present at the midnight agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Remember that he took his eleven disciples and he told eight of them to stay a certain distance and then Peter, James and John another certain distance. But we read that Mary Magdalene followed Jesus to Calvary.

She followed Jesus to Calvary and at first she appeared to be far off. But then we read about it that she is standing by the cross.

[7 : 10] There's a magnetism about Jesus that draws Mary Magdalene too. She stands by the cross and she sees him being taken down when his agony is over.

And then when Joseph and Nicodemus took his body away to be buried she followed, watching and we are told specifically that she'd be held where he was laid.

Even when he was dead. When it was only the body of Jesus she wouldn't be parted from him. And then as soon as the dark, silent Jewish Sabbath was over she's the first of them all at the sepulchre.

She comes when it is still dark because her one great desire was not to lose sight of Jesus. Some of the times there were other women with her but she especially mentioned first as if she was the leader the one most determined to stay close to Jesus.

In the book of Revelation where Jesus himself pulls back the curtain of time and through the eyes of John, the apostle John we get a glimpse of heaven. We see there a company of people singing a new song before the throne of God.

[8 : 31] And John is told these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. And surely Mary Magdalene is their representative.

Surely Mary Magdalene is in that group now right in the very front rank. She followed Jesus in the same way as the children of Israel followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

Resting, remember the children of Israel they rested when the cloud rested. When the cloud rested. When the pillar of fire rested. They rested. And they journeyed when the pillar of fire journeyed or when the cloud journeyed.

In the same way Mary Magdalene follows Jesus. And my friends we do well to follow her example. To stay close to Jesus. To once you have discovered Jesus then stay close to him.

Do what he tells you. Read his word. He reveals himself to us in his word and in prayer. Be frequently found praying to him. She was last at the cross of Jesus.

[9 : 41] Last at Calvary. And she was first at the tomb. At the empty tomb. Because we read when it was yet dark. When it was not yet. When it was yet dark.

You see it was very early in the morning which tells her that her love was not only an early riser but that her love overcame her fear. As the Bible says perfect love casteth out fear.

For it wasn't an easy thing for a woman to get up early in the morning and go in the darkness through the streets of Jerusalem where there were Roman soldiers and all manner of people and yet she went alone through the streets through the darkness and she came amongst the tombs into the cemetery.

Well that's a spooky place at the best of times. But in the half light of the morning while it was still dark we find that Mary Magdalene's love and concern and desire to be near the body of Jesus was such that it overcame her fear.

And she arrives at the tomb here on that first Easter morning and is immediately filled with a panic because the stone at the mouth of the grave is rolled away and the tomb is empty.

[10 : 53] And we read that she turns and runs to Peter and to John to tell them what had happened and to find out that they know what had happened. She's concerned about the body of Jesus the tomb is empty.

She's concerned that somebody had taken the body and she wants to find out who it was or what had happened. Where is it now? And we read that Peter and James Peter and John run with her to the tomb and when they find it empty we read then the disciples went away again into their own home.

You see they saw the empty tomb but they didn't have the same concern as Mary Magdalene Han at all. They were content to go back to their own homes and wait developments but Mary Magdalene was almost distraught because she has no earthly place of rest until she finds out where Jesus is.

She has no home on this earth without Jesus and we read about her standing at the empty tomb weeping. At the very spot where she had last seen him she stays there looking and waiting.

How about Mary whilst we commend your love we are left to wonder at your lack of understanding. We know that Mary Magdalene is mistaken.

[12 : 12] we know that the empty tomb that filled Mary Magdalene with grief should have made her shout with joy for had Jesus himself not said that he would rise again from the dead that he would rise again on that very day that he would rise again on the third day.

Now Christ still in this apocryf which would have been so welcome to Mary at that time would really of all things have been the saddest for her.

Christ not risen the saddest thing for her and without a doubt disaster for us for a sad day for us all if Christ's body was still in the tomb.

If Mary Magdalene had had more faith she would have rejoiced in the tenantless tomb because this was glad tidings of great joy that she had and Mary's weeping at this empty tomb surely teaches us a lesson truly teaches us the pain and the trouble and the anguish we cause ourselves by forgetting the promises of the Lord Jesus.

You see forgetfulness or lack of studying of the Bible or not knowing the word of God leads to unbelief and that's what it was and unbelief leads to weeping.

[13 : 49] You see the more we study the word of God the more we pray the more joyful we are the more our troubles are ironed out the more we can see that there is an answer to everything the more we can see that there is nothing new under the sun that we have been told we've been prepared for every single circumstance that comes into our lives we have been told about them in God's own word and we have been told that he will be with us lo I am with you always now the person who goes through his own life and tries to do it on his own strength then while you admire his courage you really feel sorry for his sheer stupidity because if you are given a guidebook to get you through a certain area surely it makes sense to read it and to see what it says my friends the more we study the word of God the more we pray and find out what his mind is towards us the less anguish we cause ourselves by forgetting his promises the less anguish we cause by being filled with unbelief

Mary stood at the sepulcher weeping and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher and see of two angels in white sitting the one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain and they say unto her woman why weepest thou she saith unto them because they have taken away my lord I know not where they have laid him and she turns away there's a bit of a change come on Mary Magdalene you remember when she ran and told Peter and James the other disciples about the empty tomb what she says there was that they have taken away the lord the lord but she has come to a closer understanding her grief has reached the stage now where she says they have taken away my lord it's not just anybody that has been taken away it's not just anybody's body that I'm looking keeping an eye on for the apostles it is my lord I know

I know not where they have laid him and she sees only the emptiness of the tomb yes she sees the signs she sees the linen clothes she sees the napkin and she even sees two angels standing there in the tomb but they were of no interest to her she looked at them she saw they were in Jesus and she turns away Christ isn't there the Christless tomb had no charm for her and oh my friends beware of places where Christ is not beware of going to churches and to meetings and gatherings where the lord Jesus Christ is not because even angels cannot make up for that loss and the young ones in particular when you leave here and you go away look for a place that preaches Christ no matter how poorly if they are struggling to tell you about Christ then that's the place no matter how great the other places are no matter how much entertainment you have no matter how much you enjoy it if Christ is not preached then leave it it is empty

Mary turns away from this empty tomb even the angels were of no interest to her and as she does so Jesus himself stood before her now this is the first promise that was fulfilled after the resurrection you remember the promise seek and ye shall find well here was Mary seeking the lord Jesus and she found him Jesus came the very first promise that was fulfilled after resurrection you see all the promises are fulfilled all the promises are guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ but it's very encouraging that this promise is the very first one that is fulfilled the seeker the seeking soul is met with and is given an assurance that everything is alright to an early earnest patient seeker the risen

Christ is first found but Mary doesn't recognize him she mistakes him for the gardener and she even asks him where Jesus is you see she's probably very very distraught looking for Jesus and she seeks an absent and a distant saviour and the saviour standing immediately before her she doesn't recognize him you see we also find it hard to accept how close Jesus is to us when the preacher says that in the house of God Jesus himself is there when the preacher in the bible tells you that Jesus is standing by you when the preacher says that today Jesus is passing by when he says that he's even now standing knocking at your heart trying to get in you don't believe it it is too simple it is too close it is too personal we cannot accept that he's knocking at our door that he's knocking at our heart oh yes it's easy to believe that he's near everybody else it's easy to believe that he's near those people who have been coming to church for years and who come from a good family it's easy to believe that it's easy to believe that he's near the minister it's easy to believe that he's near the elders and that he's near the church but if this is your very first time here it is very difficult to believe that

[20 : 00] Jesus has been waiting for you and that even now he's standing at the end of your seat asking you to listen and to hear and to let him enter into your heart it's very difficult it's much easier to raise our eyes to a far distant horizon and to push him away so that even in the distance we will say we'll meet with him someday we'll find him someday and we'll lift our eyes and he's there beside us and we're looking beyond them oh what a lack of recognition of the saviour there is in our lives when we come across with such things as we have to put our lives in order before Jesus will come for us we are hypocrites by coming to church because our lives are in such a mess my friends you don't see Jesus as he reveals himself to us Jesus is the one who cured the leper how at a distance no he touched them

Jesus is the one who raised the dead how at a distance no he's put out his hand and he raised them Jesus is the one that's his work that's his job he's coming for people whose lives are a mess he's coming for people whose lives are an absolute failure and Jesus is close to us all this blindness of Mary is also somewhat revered today because many people mistake the gardener for Jesus many people pin their hopes on other things other than Jesus himself they pin their hopes on the church they think that if they come often enough to church that that will do they come a certain number of times to church that that will do they pin their hopes on their own good works on the things they've done how they've lived honestly all their lives how they haven't done any harm to anybody and they think that that will stand them in good stead they pin their hopes maybe on the sacraments

I was baptized I came to the Lord's table surely I won't be cast away my friends Jesus and Jesus alone saves everything else is good in its own place and when you do it in obedience to Jesus it is good very good but Jesus and Jesus alone saves and today we are able to tell you that he's equidistant from each one of us that he's so close to us and he's close to everybody we are taught that on the very cross at Calvary he was equidistant from two thieves absolutely equidistant from them one was saved and was in paradise that very afternoon with Jesus the other was lost forevermore and just as he is within reach as he was within reach of both of those sinners both of those thieves so he is within reach of every one of us today and then

Mary says to him thinking he was the gardener sir if you have boredom hence tell me where there was laden and I will take him away and Jesus said unto her Mary no one ever used language human language as eloquently as the Lord Jesus his words carry the power that all the passion and rhetoric of man cannot equal remember what he said follow me follow me in the passing he said to Matthew and Matthew rose and left all and followed him he said follow me to fishermen and they left their trade and they left their homes and they entered on a life of devotion to him his looks as well carried a lot of meaning his looks were full of a language that the person he looked at could understand remember when he looked at

Peter when he heard Peter denying him for the third time and Peter denied him and said I know not this man I don't know what you're talking about I know not this man Jesus looked out and their eyes met and his look was such full of tender compassion and pity and pity that Peter went out and wept bitterly but we think that amongst all his looks and amongst all the things that he said that this one word Mary surpasses all that it really has so much in it because here we have the first time Christ revealing himself as the risen saviour this is the first time that Christ reveals himself to anybody and tells them that he is the risen saviour and he does it with this one word Mary this was a time when life and immortality were seen to be bound together this was the time when the risen saviour was introducing himself to an astonished and believing world and as he was doing this one would have thought that he would have had all the people assembled that he would come in a show of power in a show because his work was finished that he would have come with all the assembled potentates of the earth your pilots your chiathesis your herods standing there waiting on a big throne cheering and even heaven itself looking down to see its favourite son proclaiming his success and his victory the conqueror of death the conqueror of the grave he who vanquished the powers of hell but no there is no fanfare of trumpets there is no cheering throne just one word who to a prophet to a king to a priest to a disciple no but to a simple ordinary woman to Mary

[26 : 24] Magdalene out of whom he had cast seven devils why why did he come to Mary because she loved the most because while he was alive she loved him and she loved him the most now we know that all believers haven't got the same amount of faith all believers don't have the same amount of hope or knowledge or courage or wisdom but it's certain that those who love Christ the most will enjoy closer communion with him as our affection to Christ is so is our blessing if you give the swimmings of your life to Christ as somebody else has put it the fag end of your life to Christ then your blessings will not amount to anything or you may be saved because you believe in him and he says that even faith the science of a grain of mustard will save you but you won't get the blessings you won't get the enjoyment you won't know what that means when he says rejoice in the

Lord always and again I say rejoice according to our affection according to the way we serve him according to the way we don't want him out of our sight according to the way we attend everything that we can to find out more and more about the Lord Jesus Christ so will our blessings be how appropriate it that if the Lord Jesus Christ here was King of Kings and Lord of all Lord of Lords the one who was to judge the world the one who had completed everything that he had set out to do the one before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess how appropriate it would have been if he should have a voice of thunder that would echo and echo throughout the whole world I am God it would have been appropriate but now Jesus came and said me surely that shows us that his majesty and his power and his kingship and his royalty are no greater than his love and sympathy for one sorrowing and his sorrowing soul and his sorrowing soul and his sorrowing soul the tears of Mary brought him there yes he could have appeared to the whole wide world but he wanted to come to where the tears were being spelt and shed for him he called he called his own sheep by name and leadeth them out

I'm love it to me and he called out for a great thought to the Christian that you cannot lose yourself in the world you cannot even become unrecognizable in a company of saints you think that if you go in amongst the great saints like Moses and Noah and Enoch and Enoch Elijah and Elisha appall all those that you'll be just in the background you know my friends this word Mary.

Noah and Enoch, Elijah, Elisha, Paul, all those that you'll be just in the background. You know my friends this word Mary that he spoke to Mary Magdalene out of whom he had cast seven devils tells us that we are equals and joint equals with all these sins? No, with Christ himself, with Christ himself.

Well all the worry and all the sadness of the past days were over for Mary, for in that one word she saw herself, she saw herself and she recognized Jesus and all our hopes were made real. You see at the empty tomb there with Jesus saying that one word Mary to it, this was a foretaste of what was to come. It was a foretaste of heaven itself. This was a foretaste of the resurrection when he will look at his own and call them by their name and take them to the house of many mansions that he has prepared for them. My friends will he know you? Will he know you at the last day?

[30 : 45] Mary. Because those that aren't his friends in this world he says himself, depart from me I know you not. It's as if he's forgotten their names. But the one who knows him, he says Mary. And as Mary's tears were dried up, so your tears will be dried up.

For God himself will wipe away all tears from your eyes. Amen. Let us play.

O Lord of heaven and earth, we give thee thanks for the encouragement that we find in thine own word. And we ask that thou wouldst draw near to each and every one of us, so that we would recognize our own names.

That we would recognize our own names in such a way that when thou dost call us, we will know thee as well. So help us to make friends with thee. Help us to call out to thee. Help us never to leave thee, but to follow closely after thee at all times.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.