

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. What is Mary to do?

A. It was still dark – the red streaks of morning were just starting to appear in the sky, when **Mary Magdalene** stole out of the house and down the street.

1. She couldn't sleep anyway, so she might as well go to the tomb and spend some quiet time there – some quiet time with Him.
2. She hadn't been able to visit – since **it** happened.
3. First there was the terrible day itself, too unspeakable for words, and then it was the Sabbath and nothing could be done then, so now it was her first opportunity to try and make sense of things and to be sure nothing else could happen to Jesus.
4. She was just rounding the bend into the garden, and there it was: the tomb that should be sealed was gaping open.
5. “Dear God, what now?” she sobbed as she hurried over to the wide-open tomb.
6. One look inside confirmed her worse fears – there were all the burial clothes, but someone has taken the body.
7. She ran back to tell Peter,
- and he and John ran off to see for themselves.
8. But she was too spent to go with them – too much grief, too much tension – and now **this** – it sapped the energy right out of her.

9. Summoning her remaining strength, she headed back again;
- rounding the bend again she met Peter and John heading back, Peter just looked at her and sadly shook his head – he couldn't say a word – but the look on his face told the whole story.

10. All she could do was slump down against the cold, hard stone of the tomb and weep.

11. Finally, the gut-wrenching sobs that she had been holding in while she was with the others came in wave after wave;
- she didn't have to put on a brave face anymore – she was all alone.

12. She was all alone – perhaps that phrase described her situation better than any other – she was all alone.

B. Then, a strange thing happened – the cold stone of the tomb felt warm.

1. How could this be – the sun wasn't even up?

2. And as she looked, the opening of the tomb seemed to glow.

3. Curious as to what was happening now, Mary crept to the tomb and looked inside – and there it was, an Angel – no it was TWO Angels, sitting where Jesus body had been.

4. “Woman, why are you weeping?” they seemed to ask, yet not really talking.

5. “They've taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have laid him,” she said, not knowing if she was really talking to Angels or not.

C. Just then she heard someone coming up the path, whistling as they walked.

1. “It's the Caretaker,” she thought, “he'll know where Jesus is.”

2. As she turned toward him, the Sun suddenly broke through, lighting him from behind, and causing her to squint.

3. “Please, sir,” she began to say, but suddenly she was overwhelmed with grief and couldn’t utter a word – all she could do was sob.

4. “Hey, lady, what’s the matter,” the Caretaker said, “why are you crying?”

5. Finally, she found her voice, “Oh please, sir, tell me where you have laid the body and I’ll take care of things.”

6. The man simply said, “Mary,” and immediately she knew – it was Jesus – it was Jesus and HE WAS ALIVE!

7. She couldn’t believe it.

- All she could do was stammer out, “Teacher?!”

8. And once again the tears flowed – but this time, they were tears of overwhelming joy.

9. Then he sent her on her way, to tell all the Disciples the news that he was alive and was going to the Father.

C. That’s the thing about this story – it is not until Jesus **CALLS HER BY NAME** that Mary recognizes the risen Lord.

1. In the blink of an eye, she is transported from the darkness of grief to JOY in the Risen Christ – because she knows him in RELATIONSHIP.

2. RELATIONSHIP – that’s what this whole endeavor has been about – from Bethlehem to the Tomb – RELATIONSHIP.

3. That’s what God wanted in the first place – RELATIONSHIP.

4. And so God sent Jesus to tell, and ultimately, to show that God’s very nature is LOVE – and that God is a God of RELATIONSHIP.

5. God is not some vengeful beast that must be appeased through fear and sacrifice – God is LOVE – and wants to be in **harmony** and **relationship** with all of creation.

6. That's what Jesus came to tell;

- THAT'S what humanity couldn't hear – couldn't comprehend,
- and THAT's what **God's Love** was strong enough to overcome.

II. Our Response

A. And how do we treat this Love? What is our response to this invitation to RELATIONSHIP?

1. It seems like every day we hear more and more stories of hatred and violence.

2. It's there all around us: so much violence, so much hate, so much anger, so much intolerance – the very same things that put Jesus on a cross 2,000 years ago;

- because people couldn't understand God's love then any more than people can understand it now.

4. But we know differently – we who gather here, on the patio, or at home, know that the story doesn't end on the cross – it doesn't end in a sealed tomb – it goes on, and on – just as the **Resurrected Jesus** burst forth to bring new life and God's love to the world in a different way.

B. And it has been that same love and relationship that has been supporting us this past year.

1. Throughout this time of **pandemic** – this year of Lent, if you will – we have been upheld by God's steadfast never ending love;

- And this love will continue to support us in the days and weeks to come.

2. For it is RELATIONSHIP – relationship with God and relationship with one another that is the key.

3. It is relationship that we have missed so desperately over past year – and it is the resurrection of relationship that we are beginning to experience again.

4. And it is in **RELATIONSHIP** – with one another and with God – that we will journey together into the new dawn of Jesus’ resurrection to explore our call to be St. Columba’s in the coming new normal.

III. Go Tell

A. Once Mary recovered from the shock of finding Jesus alive, he gave her a job.

1. She is sent to, “Go and tell.”

2. And so she did – and as a result, in the Orthodox Church, Mary Magdalene is known as the Apostle to the Apostles.

3. But it wasn’t easy – the Disciples wouldn’t believe her – it was too much – too impossible to be true.

4. And it was not until Jesus stood among them that night that they would believe.

B. We too are sent to “Go and tell”

1. We are to go and tell everyone that Jesus is alive – and better than ever – and that the **God of Love**, who made you, and loves you **JUST THE WAY YOU ARE**, wants to be in a **relationship** with you.

2. It won’t be easy – people won’t believe us either – it’s too much – it’s too impossible to be true – how could God want a relationship with me?

3. But it **IS** true – and it’s our message to share.

4. And that’s the good news of Easter – not the bunnies, and the flowers, and the fancy feast;

- it’s that God Loves us **THIS MUCH** – and continues to love us over and over and over again – until we follow that longing, the longing that leads us to **RELATIONSHIP** with God.

5. Alleluia. Christ is risen – the Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia.

Let us Pray

Almighty God, whose blessed Son called Mary Magdalene to be a witness of his resurrection: Grant that we who have been raised with him, may have the courage to answer when he calls us each by name; that we may boldly share the good news of His resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

AMEN. (GBL-BCP adapted)