

*1Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" ...11Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this point, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father..."* John 20

Mary Magdalene had met Jesus years before in the region of the north shores of the Sea of Galilee. She was more than a little disturbed. Jesus saw more than her brokenness. He healed her. Thereafter, she followed Jesus at her own expense. John, a disciple very close to the heart of Jesus makes note of Mary's response to the resurrection of our Lord. We encounter her confusion, grief and encounter with the unbelievable. Let's explore this together.

John mentioned nothing of the disciples seeing the angels. Yet, Mary not only saw them, she spoke to them. *13 They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him.* Grieving for a missing body was intolerable.

She saw Jesus near the tomb, but her eyes were filled with tears and her heart pounded in the trauma of the crisis. She had no thought of Jesus' resurrection. Her mind played the video of the last time she had seen Jesus' body. Her eyes kept turning to the empty tomb.

We need not be amazed that she did not recognize Jesus. Our Lord is often near to his people without their being aware of his presence.

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)* Mary cried for and sought the dead; whereas, Jesus wanted her to respond to life. She assumed Jesus was the gardener. Troubled people often misrepresent Jesus to themselves by assigning the wrong assumptions to their difficulties. Nothing Mary had seen could shake her stubborn conclusions that Jesus was dead.

Then Jesus called her name. *16 Mary. She turned and cried out...*

Did John want us to see her turning both her body and her mind? She reached to Jesus, and he said, *17 Do not hold on to me...* When one who has been lost is found, the natural reaction is to reach to embrace. But the resurrection of Jesus is not about anyone holding onto Jesus. Rather, the resurrection of Jesus is about Jesus holding onto us.

Every crisis we face requires us to build on our past understanding of Jesus. In every crisis, Jesus pulls us toward a new and deeper understanding of his activity in our lives. Mary Magdalene was one of the first to discover that life changes after one is crucified. She would have to crucify many old ideas to experience the new life Jesus offered. Years later the apostle Paul would write *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are reminded before any of us can experience the joy of the resurrection personally, our self-centered lives must be surrendered to Jesus. Crucifying the old self is a daily process, sometimes more painful than others. Yet on the other side of giving up our right to ourselves, Jesus refines our lives with the transforming power of the resurrection.

