“Mad Mary

James 5:13-19

April 23, 2017

First of all, who’s Mary? Did you notice today’s sermon title; “Mad Mary”? Who’s Mary? And is she really mad? And who thinks she’s mad?

Please take your Bible with me and open to the story of “Mad Mary.” It’s found in the twelfth chapter of Acts.

Now, as we read, look for Mary and answer the question, “Is she mad?” Or, you might ask yourself, “Who thinks Mary’s mad?”

Acts 12:1 “

Happy Easter to all of you. Let me begin today with this question. How important do you count Easter? It’s certainly a special day for Christians. But, secondly, how many times have you found the word “Easter” in your Bible? Surpris-ingly, it’s only found once. And I’m sure you’d like to know where. Please find with me Acts chapter twelve.

Here is Acts 12:1 *“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. (2) And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. (3) And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.*

*(Then were the days of unleavened bread.) (4) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers [sixteen soldiers] to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.”*

In verse four we find that Herod intended to keep Peter in prison until after Easter. Roughly speaking, this would be the year 43 A.D.; ten years after the crucifixion of Jesus. And, to please the Jewish leaders, Herod put the Apostle Peter in prison until after Easter.

But what does this word “Easter” mean? Actually, this is the exact same word that is translated “Passover” elsewhere in the Bible. It’s found 29X in the NT and only once is it translated “Easter.”

And why? Because the LORD Jesus Christ was slain on Passover. And so the Early Church set the day for celebrating Christ’s resurrection from the dead on the Sunday after Passover.

And just for information, the Jewish Passover for 2017 began last Monday, April 10th, at sundown. So, Easter, this year, falls perfectly after Passover.

Today marks the day that the physical, literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we know it took place on a Sunday. So, on this Sunday, Christians across the word remind each other that the Son of God was raised from the dead three days after His crucifixion.

And further, the primary reason Christians worship on Sunday and not Saturday is because of the resurrection.

The Jews, to this very day, worship on Saturday because Saturday is the Sabbath, the seventh day. And they reason that when the LORD completed the six days of Creation, He rested -- on the seventh.

But, going back further, you’ll find that it was on Sunday that the LORD began His creation. So, the first day of Creation and the day Jesus rose from the dead are Sundays.

Therefore, in the NT, since that very first morning the ladies discovered the LORD’s empty tomb, the Christian Church has worshipped on Sunday. The Church’s Greatest Day is Easter Sunday. Today, we commemorate the rising again of the LORD Jesus from the grave.

And it’s all about the Resurrection. So, I’ve titled today’s sermon “Another Resurrection?” Shall we pray?

Please find with me the resurrection story in Matthew chapter twenty-eight. And begin with me in verse number five.

Matthew 28:5 *“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. (6) He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. (7) And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.”*

It’s very likely that the first Easter was an extreme shock to those women, to say the least.

But, as you know there were other people who rose from the dead before Jesus? There were other resurrections.

Please turn with me to one of these other resurrections and see with me the ultimate power of God at work on a human body. Find with me Luke chapter seven.

And look with me at Luke 7:11 *“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. (12) Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.*

*(13) And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. (14) And he came and touched the bier [casket]: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. (15) And* ***he that was dead sat up, and began to speak****. And he delivered him to his mother.”*

Look here at the power of God. Here’s a widow. She’s not only grieved over the loss of her husband. But, now, her only son, verse 12, has died. And Who arrives in town at the very hour of the man’s funeral?

As the procession passes by, Jesus speaks the mother and says “Weep not.” He then proceeds to reach out His hand and touches the casket. Then He speaks to the dead man. *“Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.”* The man, miraculously sits up and starts talking. You may have had some amazing things happen in your life. But what do you think this young man might have said? We’re not told. Then, Jesus brings him over to his mother.

I take the Bible literally unless it’s impossible to do so. Folks, this was an event in the history of the world. What God does should always amaze and astound us. He’s the Creator and He’s the Omnipotent God. He can do anything.

Here we are in a modern world with all the amazing inventions we use every day from electric lights to computers and remote control devices. There are millions of things to amaze us today. But, what Jesus Christ did stands to this very day as the most amazing thing ever done in the history of mankind.

No wonder people said “Who is this man?” Matthew 8:27 *“But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this…”*

I’m sure, along with her love for her son, we can only imagine the gratitude and love this mother would have showered on the LORD of glory that day.

But there’s another resurrection. Turn with me to Luke chapter eight. Look with me at verse 41. Luke 8:41 *“And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: (42) For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.”*

Now, look further in the passage to verse forty-nine. Luke 8:49 *“While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. (50) But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*

*(51) And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. (52) And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.*

*(53) And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. (54) And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. (55) And* ***her spirit came again, and she arose straightway****: and he commanded to give her meat. (56) And her parents were astonished: …”*

All around the Bible resurrections there is glory. And there’s simplicity here too. And there’s a clear sense of the truthfulness here. And doesn’t it strengthen your heart to see and hear Jesus at work? He simply speaks to the dead. And they come back to life.

This is what Easter is all about. God entered the human race so that we could see exactly what He was like. Now, granted, there are those who deny this and reject it and choose to disbelieve it. But when you see these stories in Scripture, you can’t help but be amazed at this God we know and serve. He’s an Amazing God. He cares so much us that, in the hour of grief and pain, He speaks and we move from ordinary thinking to be totally astounded at what He is able to do.

So, what’s going on with you this Easter? Are you frustrated? Worried? Sad? Upset with yourself? Angry? Sick? Lost? Stop looking inward and start looking upward. Look at the Savior. Look at this Man Who can speak life into dead bodies.

I’ve got some very large personal struggles. You all know that I’ve been struggling for weeks with an antibiotic that has done a number on my stomach. It really is very disheart-ening. So, where do I find my strength? What can I turn to for comfort and healing and rejuvenation? To the very same Person you turn to; the LORD of Heaven and Earth; the One Who is able to raise the dead back to life. He’s the One we need more than anyone or anything.

First, Jesus raised a widow’s son from the dead.

Second, Jesus raised a twelve year old girl from the dead.

Now, third, John chapter eleven and see with me Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:17. Lazarus had gotten sick and died. The funeral is over. It now been four days that Lazarus has been inside the grave. Jesus arrives at Bethany and speaks to his two sisters, Mary and Martha; verse seventeen.

John 11:17 *“Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.”*

Please skip down to verse 21. John 1:21 *“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. (22) But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*

*(23) Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. (24) Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. (25) Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

*(26) and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (27) She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”*

Then Jesus turns to her sister Mary who, like Martha, is grieving the loss of her brother; verse thirty-three.

John 11:33 *“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, (34) And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. (35) Jesus wept. (36) Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!* “

And watch this marvelous man at work here; verse 41.

John 11:41 *“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. (42) And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

*(43) And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. (44) And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, loose him, and let him go.*

*(45) Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.”*

Whatever happens to you this week; whatever happens to you this month or this year, try to get your heart and mind around the Person of Jesus Christ. See Him in His glory.

Yes, you have circumstances that are overwhelming. Yes, you have problems. Yes, you have people in your life that are causing you grief. Yes, you’ve financial troubles; health issues; emotional concerns; children in need of help; parents in need of help.

But, you also have a Savior Who is able to raise the dead. And that Person Who is able to raise the dead, did Himself rise up out of the grave.

Folks, He’s reliable and trustworthy. He’s able; especially on those days when you don’t think He is.

That’s what we find in the resurrection accounts and in that first Easter Sunday. All these stories are all glorious and all wonderful and all true events. They’re all precious to review and find courage in.

And? Why did the LORD raise these people from the dead? The answer to that question is found in Romans 8:11. Here it is. *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead* ***shall also quicken your mortal bodies*** *by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*

The LORD of Heaven and Earth intends to raise up our bodies after we have been placed into the grave. These three stories are just confirming to us that, since He’s *already* done it, He certainly can do it again.

Please look closely with me at what the Bible teaches about resurrection. II Corinthians 4:14 *“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.”*

I Corinthians 6:14 *“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.”*

John 6:40 *“And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

John 6:44 *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

John 6:54 *“… I will raise him up at the last day.”*

First, the LORD wants us to know that He has the power to raise the dead. In Revelation 1:18 Jesus says *“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*

You see, Satan may have been the one to bring death into the human race. But the LORD Jesus Christ has the power to overcome death itself. He is the only one this powerful.

First, the LORD wants us to know that He has the power to raise the dead.

Second, the LORD wants you to know that you too will be raised from the dead. Yes, there will be a future resurrection; many of them.

John 5:28 *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

*Everyone* in every grave in every cemetery will hear the voice of the LORD Jesus Christ. John 5:28 *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice …”*

And did you notice there will be two totally different resurrections? Verse 29. John 5:29*“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

Now, practically speaking, when you read a verse like this, you can almost hear the LORD calling you to a decision: which one would you choose? Will it be the resurrection to eternal life or will it be to the resurrection to eternal condemnation?

Folks, the decision can’t be made after you are in the grave. All we can do at that point is to listen to that grand and glorious voice of the LORD Jesus. The choice has to be made today or at least, before you close your eyes in death. You see, the people who are the most prepared to die are the ones who are the most prepared to live. We do *not* have the choice of whether we will hear the voice of Jesus from our graves. The choice will have already been made.

We make that choice when we hear the Gospel message that Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day. Everyone who believes on the LORD Jesus Christ will be saved and will one day experience the resurrection unto life. Those who reject the Savior today will enter the resurrection of condemnation on the day they hear the LORD’s voice from the grave.

Now think carefully with me about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. How important an event is that? How important is it to you? Jesus went to Calvary to die as the Sacrifice for your sins. The moment you believe that message, the moment you receive that message as your own, you personally gain the value of the work of both the cross of Christ and His glorious resurrection. You, by faith in the Son of God, will, along with millions and millions of other Believers will one day, stand up on your own gravestone and be part of that group of Saints that go marching in. Will you make it to Heaven?

So, here’s the question each one of us must answer for himself. Do you believe that the LORD Jesus died and paid for all of *your* sins on Calvary; then three days later was raised from the dead? And do you believe that He died in *your* place; that He suffered for *your* sins?

The cross of Christ provided our complete forgiveness. And the resurrection of Christ proves that the Father was pleased with His Son’s sacrifice on our behalf. And His resurrection is the guarantee that you too will also be raised from the dead in the resurrection of the just.

What will you do with that glorious Gospel message? Will you receive it? Will you believe it? It really is your choice.

John 3:16 *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

 It’s a huge choice the day you make to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. The Scripture all says this, *“The wages for sin is death,…”* and *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death.”* And the wages for your sin might be death, *“but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD.”* “It is appointed unto men once to die; and after this, the judgment.” If you will repent of your sins and believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, then you are making today the Day of your Salvation.

* “I Repent” = I change my mind about God, Christ, my sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* “I Believe” = I simply trust the Lord Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for my sins. And in believing, I make Him Lord over my entire life.

Today, Resurrection Sunday, Easter, will you receive Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Savior?

*“LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of your grace. I believe that You sent Your Son to the Cross to die for me. Please forgive me of all my sins and make me Your child. Thank you.”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 367 “Christ, The LORD, Is Risen Today”