

“When Hope Is Gone”

Sunday, April 21, 2019

Matthew 28:1-10

The first to arrive at the empty tomb on April 5th, 33 A.D. was a woman named Mary. I believe she came for a variety of reasons. But, one of those reasons is this. Her hope was gone.

I've titled today's message “When Hope Is Gone.” Shall we pray?

I think I might be guilty of something. I'd like to share with you. I think I'm often reading into the people in Scripture; Mary included. So, please pardon me if you think I've done an injustice to her after you hear what I have to say today.

It's never said in the Bible that God is the God of the heart. Nor does it say God is the God of the broken-hearted. But, He is. Psalm 34:18 “*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; ...*”

So, although we can't really know what was happening in the heart of Mary dawn turns into sunrise, I believe we are right to imagine what she was thinking.

She had come with some other women to the tomb just before sunrise to do something specific; to anoint the body of the LORD with spices. You see, they, and everyone else, didn't believe that Jesus would rise from the dead. Their hope was gone.

Mary, as you know, was, not only the first one at the tomb that day. She was also the first one to meet Jesus alive on that same day. Do you remember that she thought He was the gardener? Do you remember that when He spoke her name, she recognized His voice? And do you remember her response; “Rabboni,” which means “Master.”

Let's begin there. Please open your Bible with me to the Gospel of John at chapter twenty and find the eleventh verse.

John 20:11 “*But **Mary** stood without at the sepulchre weeping [a sepulchre is a stone room; actually a stone coffin; it's a burial place]: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, (12) and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. (13) And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

*(14) And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. (15) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence [if you've carried him elsewhere], tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. (16) Jesus saith unto her, **Mary**. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”*

Did you know that there are at least five different women in the New Testament who have the name Mary? There's Mary, mother of Jesus. Then there's Mary Magdalene. Then there's Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, of Bethany. Then there's Mary, the mother of James and Joses (Matthew 27:55-61). And there's also, Mary, the mother of John Mark. Do you remember this? Acts 12:12 “*And when he [Peter] had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.*”

My question is this. “Who is this Mary here in the story of that first resurrection morning? Who is it that's first at the tomb? Who is this Mary crying? Who is it that has no hope and whose heart is clearly broken? Who is it that Jesus spoke to and called her “Mary”? Who's the woman whose hope was completely gone?

The key to understanding darkness is light. The key to understanding death must be life. So, what's the key to understanding despair? I believe it must be hope.

How would you have gone to bed that first night after the crucifixion of Jesus? Tired? Yes, but possibly unable to sleep?

Confused? Maybe feeling deserted? Maybe even lost? Heart-broken? Feelings of despair? Emotions had to have run high that final week of Christ's life; both for Him and for those who followed Him. They'd been with Jesus for years. And now He was dead. And, folks, dead is final.

Every tombstone in the every cemetery everywhere across the globe gives you a beginning date -- a birthdate, and an ending date -- a date of death. And that date of death says one thing: the end.

So, Mary's heartbroken. And her hope in the LORD is gone.

Here's how one man puts it.

"I wonder if Mary went to bed that Saturday night. If she did, I am confident she slept little, if any. It is hard to rest when your heart is broken.

It is obvious she was anxious to return to the tomb where Jesus was buried. She could not even wait until the sun came up, but left her house while it was still dark, which was as much a reflection of her spirit as the time of day.

She had just lived through a week filled with surprises and was probably longing for a time of peace and quiet at the center of her grief. Surely nothing unusual would happen early in the morning that would interfere with this. Little did she know the biggest surprise was yet to come.

She arrived at the tomb only to discover the stone at the entrance had been rolled away. To her dismay, Jesus' body was missing, which broke her heart even more. How could anyone be so insensitive and cruel? Hadn't they done enough to this man whom she loved so dearly? Would this drama never end? No, it would not, and in the end, she would be glad.

She did the only thing she knew to do at that time. She ran to tell Simon Peter and the beloved disciple what she had discovered. Immediately, they ran to the tomb to find things as

she described. Without any answers they returned home, but Mary lingered at the tomb.

As Mary stood weeping outside the empty tomb, she had an encounter with two angels and then a man whom she thought to be the gardener. Upon being asked why she was weeping, she told them she was disturbed because someone had taken the body of her Lord. She even volunteered to retrieve it if she was told where to go. As it turned out, she did not need to go anywhere. The one she was seeking was standing beside her, and she recognized him only after he spoke her name." [Found on <https://ethicsdaily.com> "Easter: When Grief Meets Hope" by Robert Browning, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky., on April 8, 2012].

I guess one of the things I'm after today is this. God *does* allow us to experience loss and grief. He made us emotional creatures. Like so many thousands of others, Mary had placed her hope in this man Jesus, Who claimed to be the Son of God, the Savior of mankind, and the Promised Jewish Messiah. And now it was over. Sometimes we feel there's no hope. If that's the case, take a closer look at Mary.

You see, hope defines Christianity. If you read the Gospels well, you will see that many people put their hope in the LORD while He was here on the earth. He healed. He taught. He loved them. He cared. He was moved with compassion. He prayed for them. He was their King. And then He died. He'd been arrested, tried, sentenced, and, in the worst imaginable way, He was crucified. Then His body was taken and placed inside a Jewish grave. Hope – gone.

For those of you who know your Bible, you know that hope is one of the strongest words in the Bible. And you also know that Christianity is rooted in hope. You see, if Christ hasn't risen from the dead, everyone here today is hopeless. You have no hope. This life is all there is.

But, since Christ *did* rise from the dead; when your loved one leaves this earth and his or her body is placed into the ground; if that person is asleep in Christ, then something completely remarkable is going to take place someday. All those who sleep in Jesus will be raised from the dead. You *will* see your loved one again. Death is going to be swallowed up in victory. And one day death is going to be cast into hell. That's what the Bible teaches.

Consider just how many people you know personally who have taken their own lives; and for one reason. Their hope was gone. And, folks, when hope is gone, despair runs deep; more deeply can anyone can fathom.

The Christian message is the only message in all of history that carries the message of absolute hope. You see, Christ *did* rise from the dead. And because He rose, we too will rise.

Now, please open with me to Mark chapter fifteen.

Have you ever wondered when you've first met someone if they'd ever had a broken heart? And do *you* know how it feels to have a broken heart? And do you think you can understand hope if you've had a broken heart?

I want to consider today this one person who had closely followed Jesus and then, at His crucifixion, moved from hope to despair. Mary. I believe she was crushed. I believe her hope was gone. So, would you agree with me that there's something to gain; something to learn from Mary?

Please find with me the greatest story ever recorded. Mark 15:33 "*And when the sixth hour was come [that would be 12 Noon our time], there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour [that would be three p.m.]. (34) And at the ninth hour [at 3:00 p.m.] Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

(35) And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. (36) And one ran and filled a sponge full of

vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

(37) And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. (38) And the veil of the temple was rent in twain [torn in two] from the top to the bottom. (39) And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, truly this man was the Son of God.

[Show video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shwUfS4_VpM

Verse forty - *(40) There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was **Mary Magdalene**, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; ...*" Please take note that Mark tell us about these three women.

Now, Mark 15:41 "*(Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.*

(42) And now when the evening was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, (43) Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor [meaning that he was member of the Jewish Sanhedrim], which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

*(44) And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. (45) And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. (46) And he [Joseph] bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. (47) And **Mary Magdalene** and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid."*

Now, find with me these same three women who had watched Jesus as He was nailed to a Roman cross; who had watched Him die on Calvary; where were *they* that first Sunday morning? Mark 16:1 "*And when the Sabbath was past, **Mary Magdalene**, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought*

sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. (2) And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. (3) And they said among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

(4) And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. (5) And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. (6) And he saith unto them, be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. (7) But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. (8) And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.

*(9) Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to **Mary Magdalene**, out of whom he had cast seven demons. (10) And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. (11) And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."*

Immediately after His resurrection, Jesus appeared five times in five different settings to different individuals. But, do you who was the *first* to discover the empty tomb? Who was it that *first* met the LORD that day? It was Mary Magdalene, out of whom the LORD had cast seven demons.

By the way, folks, not a single soul, no, no one; not even those who closely followed Jesus, believed He would rise from the dead. Look again at verse ten. Mark 15:10 "*And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. (11) And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."*

The normal and the natural thing to do when someone dies is to make sure they are buried. Joseph did that. But Mary was there too. She and the others watched as the LORD's body was taken down from the cross; then carried to a nearby

garden; and then placed inside the tomb. They watched as the men rolled the stone up against the grave's opening.

And folks, the Apostles, all of them, had deserted Him. I imagine *that* affected Mary too. Jesus was now been buried; His body inside a tomb in a garden very near to where He'd been crucified. And they all had went home; to sleep; to mourn; to grieve; and they all, like Mary, felt that hope was gone.

Next, we find Mary arriving at the tomb; early. She'd gone out and purchased spices with the intention of anointing the body of the LORD. But, on the way, she and the women with her, had debated who they might find to roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb. You see. They didn't believe Jesus would rise from the dead. Then, once she saw the empty tomb, Mary thought someone had taken the body of Jesus.

Now, the Bible tells us that the Apostles were in mourning, verse ten. They were weeping, grieving, sad; being together because Jesus, the One they were so sure was the Promised Messiah, had now been crucified; died, and was now buried. The Apostles didn't believe He'd rise from the dead.

Think about it like this. They'd seen Him crucified. They'd watched Him die. They watched as He was placed in Joseph's tomb. There was no doubt about all that.

But, even after Jesus saying it to these men seven times on seven different occasions. Seven times they heard Him predict; not only His death at the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees, but His physical, bodily resurrection. Yet, they were grieving the loss of the One they'd been with for three and one half years. They just didn't believe it; yet.

Now, the reason I want you to see the crucifixion story again is this. Everyone believed that He had been crucified. Everyone believed that He had died. But, no one, not one person, initially, believed that He'd rise from the dead.

I imagine that you're here today and you've got no trouble whatsoever believing that the Son of God was crucified and that He died. But, who here believes in the Resurrection?

Folks, for a lot of people, the resurrection of Christ is just a religious story found in the Bible. But, for those who are willing to consider the story and weigh the evidence, they find time and again that there is only one conclusion you can come to. Jesus rose from the grave and He's alive today.

According to the records of the Bible, nobody believed He'd come back to life. And here's where Mary's story is so important. Once she'd seen the LORD; once she'd heard Him speak her name; once she knew for a fact that He was alive, everything changed. And the exact same thing happens when someone believes in the resurrection today. Everything changes.

And here's why. Because if Jesus did conquer death, then we have in Christ at least these two things: We have a Savior from sin; a way to have all of our sins forgiven; and we have the promise of our own resurrection from the grave. There's coming a day for all of those who believe in the resurrection that we will not only enter the glories of heaven; but also, that our bodies will one day become resurrected bodies.

Mary Magdalene, according to the Bible, is the first to believe the resurrection of Christ. Then Pete. Then John. Then the other Apostles. Then more and more and more. And for a full forty days, Jesus appeared with numerous people in a variety of places; once to a group of over five hundred people.

Now why? Here's why. Because apart from the resurrection, you have no hope.

I Corinthians 15:17 *"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is empty; ye are yet in your sins. (18) Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."*

Jesus died and in His death, He took the entire punishment for the sins of the world. Your sins are gone because of Christ. And how do you know that? You know that because He literally rose from the dead. The resurrection is the proof that everything Jesus said and did was totally true.

Without His resurrection, we have no hope.

So, for those of you with no hope, I have something to offer you. Jesus Christ is your Hope.

Do you remember the story of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead? Do you remember who it was that Jesus first met after he arrived in the Bethany cemetery after Lazarus had lain in the grave four days? It was his sister Martha. And what did Martha say to Him? "LORD, if you'd have been here Lazarus wouldn't have died." Jesus said this to her; the greatest words a man could ever say. *"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believes in Me, though he were dead; yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Folks, when hope is gone, you want one thing; the wrong thing. You want your hope restored. Yet, what you really need is a Person. You need the One Person Who you can completely depend upon; One Person Who can comfort you beyond anyone on this earth. You need the One Who called Himself the Resurrection and the Life.

The center of history is Christ. He divides all of history in half. Just say today's date and you're saying that Jesus lived, died, and rose again. Why else would we split history into B.C. and A.D.?

Yet, there are a lot of hopeless people around you and me today. Christ Jesus, the LORD of Heaven and earth is their only Hope. Find Christ; you find Hope. It's that simple.

When hope is gone must certainly be among the worst feelings in the world. But finding the resurrected Christ must be among the greatest feelings in the world. Yes, the LORD

does allow us sometimes to go into the valley of no hope. But, like Mary, He is the One you need.

The following is a true story.

Sherzod is from Uzbekistan. He was led to faith in Christ by Kari Hand, 16, who befriended him and introduced him to the Savior.

"I was strictly Muslim. I prayed five times a day and read the Koran and learned it by heart. I kept it with me all the time," Sherzod said. "All I knew was Islam, and I believed in Islam. I really prayed. I thought all religions except Islam were wrong."

Then he met Kari at a basketball game.

"After that, whenever I talked to her, she always talked about Christianity and her faith and about Grace Baptist Church [in Scott, Ark.]," Sherzod recounted. "When she talked about Christianity, I used to get mad. But I didn't tell her that because I didn't want her to feel bad. All the time, she spoke about Christianity and about the Bible. She gave me some books about Christianity, too. I really felt strange because I had never heard Christian things before. I didn't believe in Christianity. So I used to get mad all the time when she spoke about that."

As time passed, Kari's testimony and witness began to reach him.

"I got used to that and started to feel something whenever she talked about that," Sherzod continued. "I asked a lot of questions of her, everything about Christianity. I asked them on purpose to see if she could answer or not. She did. She could answer those questions, and that really surprised me."

Then he began to read the Bible and explore the difference between Islam and Christianity. He began to rethink Islam and open his mind to Christianity.

"In Islam we have to pray five times in a day, and it is not guaranteed that you go to heaven. It is not guaranteed that all

your sins are going to be forgiven," he said. "But when I read the Bible, I began to realize I had been following something that was wrong all my life."

Sherzod began attending Grace Baptist, where Kari is a member. He liked the church, the people, Pastor Jerry Terrell and the youth group.

"The preaching of Brother Jerry really touched my heart," Sherzod said.

Then one day while Kari was on the phone with him, she asked if he was ready to accept Christ.

"That really touched my heart, too, because I had been wanting to do that for a long time, but I didn't know how to start. I didn't really know how to do that. So, I said, 'OK, what am I supposed to do?'"

Kari, who had been trained in Evangelism Explosion, guided him through what it means to confess sin, repent and place his trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, and Sherzod responded by praying to receive Christ.

In conversations with Terrell about seeking baptism, they decided he should share his decision to his parents.

Sherzod said his parents had always shown their love for him, met his needs and supported him in every way. He thought they would support his decision.

He phoned his parents on his dad's birthday.

"I said, 'Dad, I have to tell you something very important. It's very important to me and it's a big change, and I hope you are not going to get mad or upset with me,'" Sherzod told him.

His father told him he could never be angry at anything Sherzod did.

"I told him I accepted Christ and that I'm getting ready to get baptized," Sherzod said. "He kept silent for a couple of minutes. I said, 'Dad, are you OK?' and he said, 'Sherzod, I don't think the thing you are doing is right, and I didn't really expect that from you. If you are sure the thing you are doing is

right, and if you are not going to follow Islam, there is no hope for you to come to Uzbekistan. If you ever come to Uzbekistan, don't ever come to my house. I don't want you to talk to your brother or sister or to Mom or to any other relatives.'

"He hung up the phone," Sherzod said. "After a couple of minutes, I tried to call him again, but he wouldn't pick up the phone. I tried to call him every day for a couple of weeks, but no one picked up the phone."

Pastor Terrell speculated that the father's decision may have been motivated by love and fear. Uzbekistan is 88 percent Muslim. Sherzod's father may have feared for Sherzod's life and for the lives of his family."

"I am not sorry I accepted Christ," he said. "I am not sorry for getting baptized. Even though my parents did that, I am not sorry for anything that happened."

He faces his uncertain future with confidence that God will lead him." [Found on www.bpnews.net "Exchange Student Accepts Christ; Disowned By Family" by Charlie Warren].

Does the LORD allow His children to experience times when hope is gone? Yes, He does. But, folks, He wants you to set your hope in Him and in Him alone. Psalm 43:5 *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?"*

Hope in God: *for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."*

So, for those of you who feel you've got no hope in this world; like Mary, be glad that you now see this; because, again like Mary, the moment you look to Jesus Christ, you find Hope. He is your Hope. The last word we are given in the Bible from Mary Magdalene is this "Rabboni." It's translated "Master."

To moment you see Him as the Savior of Mankind and the moment you trust Him, He becomes your Hope.

"Christ, The LORD is Risen Today."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7o95WfCpopo>

I know this sounds so simple. But, think about it like this. This is what was most important regarding Jesus. After He had died, He was raised from the dead.

Will you today, acknowledge you are a sinner and in a need of a Resurrected Savior? Today is the Day of salvation. Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ and you will be saved – for eternity.

So, for Easter Sunday, 2019, be honest enough to ask yourself the question "Do I have hope? And is my hope enough to carry me through this world and on into the next?"

The Resurrected Christ is your Final Hope. Will you trust Him today?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 358 "Because He Lives"