

# SEEN AND SENT

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April 21, 2019 (8:30am)  
Easter Sunday  
[John 20:11-21](#)

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## Welcome

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Hymn #409VU "Morning Has Broken"

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## Reading John 20:11-17

*Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, '**Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?**' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, '**Mary!**' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, '**Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."**'*

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## Message "Seen"

Early on Sunday morning, as a new week was dawning, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, and John ben-Zebedee came to Jesus' tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away - and the body of Jesus was gone.

John left perplexed.

Peter left discouraged.

Mary just couldn't leave.

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John's gospel doesn't say it, but Mark and Luke both say that the purpose of this post-sabbath visit to the tomb was to adorn Jesus' hastily buried body with burial spices.

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Whereas the other three gospels describe a *group* of women attending to the tomb that morning (all of which mention that Mary Magdalene was one of them), John details a singular, very personal experience focusing solely on Mary.

Whoever else might have witnessed the empty tomb, they are now gone. And Mary is there alone.

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Mary may have had unfinished business. We can picture her clasping the bag of unused spices.

And it is not hard to relate to a person who, with this indignity of a stolen body added to already deep grief, just couldn't move. She couldn't convince her feet to take her back to the others.

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On more than one occasion, I have had the solemn duty / privilege to be at a hospital bedside with a family at the very moment that their loved one passes away.

People usually don't rush away. They hug, and cry, and pray; they touch the body; and talk to

*Rev. T. Blaine Gregg*

each other and... to the departed.

I have witnessed how difficult it can be for them to try and figure out how to leave the hospital room.

Death is not the final event.

Walking away from the death can be equally as hard to experience.

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I imagine that this may have been part of why Mary was still outside the tomb long after the others had left.

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Mary lifts her head and through her tear clouded eyes, she sees people in the tomb. They reach out to her in grief. *Why are you weeping?* She answers honestly and tells them about the missing body of Jesus. If these angelic messengers had hoped to turn her grief into joy, she was not able to accept it.

Her head drops into her hands again and she wails in agony.

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Another unfamiliar voice... this time from the other direction. *Why are you weeping?*

*You must be the gardener.*

*Do you know where my Lord is?*

*Just tell me and I will go get him and my friends and I won't bother you or this garden again.*

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Mary doesn't know, but we do; this is no gardener. This is Jesus, resurrected: mysteriously alive.

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When Jesus calls her name, a turning point occurs for Mary. She is enlightened with a resurrection awareness that re-invigorated her life, the lives of Jesus' other followers, and countless future disciples who saw and heard nothing for themselves, but came to believe.

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**Reading** John 20:18-21

*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her. When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the [temple police], Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'*

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**Message** "Sent"

Mary finally found her feet and she ran back to the others. *I have seen the Lord. He talked to me. He is going to ascend to our God.*

John's gospel implies what Luke's narrative says explicitly: the rest of the disciples found the story hard to believe: it was an "idle tale".

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But that evening, the Risen Christ appeared appeared to more of the disciples. This time, they were invited to touch him (to be sure he wasn't an apparition); to feel his fresh wounds (to be sure he wasn't an imposter).

*Be at peace over what has happened.*

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*Set your grief aside, because... our mission, my ministry to proclaiming the nearness of the realm of God, has barely begun.*

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The ultimate destiny of the band of Jesus' followers was not to be left with the mental image of what they witnessed on the cross, not to be stuck in the garden with an unused bag of spices having viewed a pillaged tomb, not to be huddled in fear looking at the inside of a locked door.

The lasting image etched in their minds was not destined to be the limp body of Jesus hanging on the cross; it was not destined to be the wrapped corpse lying in a rock-hewn tomb.

They were to remember the empty cross and the empty tomb.

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Good Friday was not an ending.

Easter was a new beginning.

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Mary saw an empty tomb.

She saw angels.

She saw Jesus, risen.

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Mary was sent to share this good news.

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Peter and John saw an empty tomb.

They saw excitement in Mary's eyes as she insisted she had seen Jesus that morning.

They saw Jesus for themselves.

The disciples were sent to continue the mission of Jesus. Proclaim to a weary world that the peace-filled realm of God was in their midst.

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And so, we too are sent to find ways to make this possibility for creation visible to a peace-hungry world.

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**Hymn #356VU "Seek Ye First"**

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### **Blessing**

May the loving power of God,  
which raised Jesus to new life,  
strengthen you in hope,  
enrich you with his love,  
and fill you with joy in the faith.