

John 20:10-17 (NIV)

10 Then the disciples went back to their homes,

11 but Mary 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, 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. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

43-20-01-Why Are You Crying?

Easter, resurrection, grief, faith

John 20:10-17

The Resurrection gives us faith to see beyond earthly sorrows.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading)

–After Jesus died, the disciples suffered from *major separation anxiety*. Imagine their condition: they'd left everything to follow Christ as King, and now their King was gone; their faith was thrown into confusion.

–This message today focuses on Mary Magdalene's *separation anxiety*, which Jesus confronts with a question: "Why are you crying?" (that phrase comes twice in this **text**; and I chose it as my sermon **title**).

–**HOM.idea**. But like Mary, we can fall into a pattern of weeping over our losses, and the celebration of Easter asks us the question: "Why are you crying?" Let's put ourselves in Mary's shoes with some questions....

I. Why Are We Weeping Beside an Empty Tomb?

A. Maybe we don't yet understand the full impact of the Resurrection:

1. Even His disciple didn't get it– **John 20:9**, They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. They "*went back to their homes*" [**v.10**] returning to the familiar, the comfortable, the safe).
2. We have the story in 4 Gospels, but we, too, can miss the point:
 - a. Christ's Resurrection confronts the *old way of life*: it heralds a *future age*... it announces that *God's eternal Reign* has begun.
 - b. Death must no longer to be feared: **the Resurrection calls for faith that looks beyond earthly sorrows**.

B. Christians can persist in an old pattern of thinking– **v.11**, *but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb*

1. Do we stand "*outside the tomb*"? (How often do we stand paralyzed before all the news of tragedy and death published in the media?)
2. Is this the direction of our gaze, "*bent over*" looking "*into the tomb*," a *downward, earthbound* staring, *captivated by the temporal*?
3. Where's our focus? On "*the tomb*"? On yesterday? On the past? (The Resurrection declares the *present* arrival of the *future* and calls us to be **people of the future** in *thought, word and deed*.)

TRANS: We celebrate Easter around springtime, because the new life seen at spring symbolically announces God's promise of resurrection.

(One spring afternoon, a teacher gave plastic eggs to her students and sent them outside to find signs of life and put them inside the eggs. They came back with eggs containing butterflies, ants, flowers, twigs, grass. But the egg of a boy with Downs syndrome had nothing in it. When asked why he'd put no signs of life in his egg, he said, "*Because the tomb was empty.*") That boy knew Easter's real meaning. It's not about nature's life cycle. Easter celebrates an empty tomb.

II. Why Can't We See the Resurrected Christ?

- A. Mary was weeping, and tears can blind us. Her mind was on a *dead Christ*, while a *living Christ* stood nearby. (Tears from loss can cloud our eyes of faith from seeing an ever-present Savior.)
- B. Mary was so focused on her loss that she missed the big picture!—v.12-13. (She) saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 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." (It's *sad* when people focus on angels and miss finding Christ, BUT it's *sadder* when we Christians miss seeing God's hand of intervention by being preoccupied with our losses.)
- C. Mary's focus made Jesus Himself unrecognizable—v.14, ...she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. (We, too, can miss recognizing Jesus if we look for Him...)
 1. in past spiritual experiences, no matter how glorious they were (Jesus delivered Mary from seven demons! What a testimony!)
 2. in what we want to do for Him (We can be on a mission that isn't from God—Mary was set on fulfilling her plan to anoint Jesus' corpse with perfumes and burial spices, fit for a king's burial.)
 3. in what we are used to (Mary last saw Jesus hanging naked and battered beyond recognition. She expected to find a lifeless body wrapped in bloodstained graveclothes. (Mary had not yet learned that the Resurrection would make all things new!)

TRANS: Caught up in grief, Mary ignored the angels' question, "Why are you crying?" She again failed to hear it from Jesus' own lips!—v.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." [Ancient laborers, to preserve their clothes, often removed them for work. That may be why Mary mistook Jesus for a gardener. The Bible says He left His graveclothes behind in the tomb.] Standing before Mary was a healthy, robust physique with no similarity to the pale, bruised

body she saw naked on the cross. We too, get overwhelmed by grief and earthly sorrows. Our dreams fall apart into an unrecognizable mess, and we forget that His Resurrection will put them all back together. Faraday the chemist had an assistant who dropped a silver cup into a jar of acid, which dissolved it. Faraday comforted his grieving helper by adding a chemical that precipitated all the silver. When he sifted out the shapeless mass and sent it to the silversmith for restoration, the cup came back shining brighter than before. We need to remember that whatever this life dissolves and causes to disappear will be restored by the One Who said, "I am the resurrection and the life.")

III. How Do We Find the Risen Lord?

- A. We must, like Mary, be open to help from others in finding Christ. (She says, "*tell me*" to a stranger, and wasn't far off in mistaking Him for a naked gardener. Scripture calls Jesus the second Adam. His Resurrection, from a garden tomb, restored what the first naked gardener had lost in the beginning—an awesome parallel!)
- B. We must make our relationship with Jesus personal—v.16, Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).
 1. "Mary"—God addresses us as individuals—Isa 43:1 (NKJ), "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine."
 2. "Rabboni"—Our part is recognizing Him as our *Teacher* and *Lord*, Whose instructions we seek and Whose words we obey.
- C. We must let go of our desires, in order to do God's will, v.17, Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"
 1. "Do not hold on to me"—"You can't have Heaven yet!" (It's not time for our resurrected King to stay with us. That *will* happen later.)
 2. "Go instead to my brothers and tell them"—"Be My messenger! Be My voice! My work is now your work"—for "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (The Resurrection of Jesus forever established that relationship between us and God.)

CONCLUSION:

—[One childbirth educator described labor by as an *unconscious grieving process*, because *birth* leaves behind an *empty womb*.] The empty tomb of Easter created the possibility of our *new birth*; **His Resurrection calls us to a living, born-again faith that sees beyond the sorrows of this world.**