

WHAT HAVE YOU SAID?

John 20:1-18 The Text vs. 18 *"Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her."*

When George Herbert Walker Bush served as 43rd Vice-President under President Ronald Reagan, he represented the United States at the Moscow funeral of longtime Russian General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. What happened there gave the impression of a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow, Victoria. She stood motionless before her husband's coffin before his casket was closed. Then, she did what could be considered as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed. Just as the soldiers touched the casket lid to close it, she reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. It was an act of great courage. It was an act of hope. Because there, in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the Russian leader hoped her husband had been wrong. She hoped there was another life. That Jesus might have mercy on her husband's soul. Yes, even in Russia, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ had changed the life of one woman.

The stone was not rolled away from the tomb so Jesus could get out. It was rolled away so that others could get in. So, they could see that Jesus was gone! His Resurrection is the key to our Christian faith! But what has been said about history's most significant event? Many skeptics have said believing Jesus rose from the dead is nothing more than a blind leap of faith. It has little, or no basis in truth. But when confronted with the facts, those who are intellectually honest are forced to admit, the Resurrection *was* an historical event based on *undeniable* evidence.

Jesus made numerous appearances after His Resurrection. He comforted Mary outside His tomb on that first Easter Sunday morning. Following His resurrection, while on the road to Emmaus, Jesus gave a lesson to two of His followers about the prophecies of the Old Testament saying they were fulfilled in His death and Resurrection. He ate in the presence of His disciples. He invited them to touch Him. He was seen by more than 500 at the same time. (1 Corinthians 15:6) And Simon Peter's first sermon dealt with Christ's Resurrection. Peter encouraged people to receive Jesus as their living Savior, and *"that day there were added about three thousand souls."* (Acts 2:41)

That first group of believers has miraculously multiplied. There were 2.4 billion Christians around the world in 2020, in 195 nations. That number continues to grow! Down through the ages, billions of lives have been transformed showing the power of the Resurrection. Many have recovered from addictions. Alcohol. Drugs. Destitute and despairing have found hope. Broken marriages have been restored. And the most conclusive proof for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is that He is living within believers' lives today. He is transforming lives. He is making all things new! The Resurrection sets Christianity apart. No other religious leader has ever risen from the dead. No other religious leader has ever conquered sin.

And in our lesson today, Mary Magdalene, once she understood to whom she was speaking outside Jesus' tomb in the garden, once she recognized the gardener was her precious Teacher Jesus, she cried out, *"Rabboni"*, which means *Teacher!* And when Jesus told her to go spread the news of His Resurrection, nothing could stop her from telling others! Bernard of Clairvaux, co-founder of the Knights Templars, one of the wealthiest and most popular military orders in Western Christianity, a Catholic military order founded about 1119 A.D. and headquartered on Temple Mount in Jerusalem, existed for nearly two centuries. They were a major leader in the Reformation of the Catholic Benedictine Order and were among the most skilled fighting units of the Crusades during the Middle Ages. Their distinctive white cloaks bore a red cross.

And a little over one-thousand years after the Resurrection, Bernard of Clairvaux called Mary Magdalene the *"Apostle to the Apostles"* because of her role in telling Jesus' Disciples about the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene took the Good News to the Disciples; *"You'll never believe it. I have seen the Lord!"* She told them what she had seen. She told them what she had experienced. Those male disciples had disappeared, as Jesus predicted they would during the Last Supper (Matt. 26:31). Yet, the two Mary's stayed at the tomb. Matthew suggests they stayed even past sunset in the darkness, among tombs. They were the only ones who had stayed at His tomb. Then, early the next morning, Mary saw Jesus after He rose. She was so excited. She couldn't keep her excitement to herself. She was bursting at the seams to share the best news she had ever heard. Mary was enthusiastic!

Have you ever been like that? Overflowing with enthusiasm about good news that you just received and had to share it with everyone you met? You're walking through the grocery store. You wish you could scream out about the most amazing thing that just happened to you! A great trip you took. A powerful movie you saw. A fabulous restaurant at which you ate. Or something big just happened in your family. Whatever it is, you just feel like sharing it with everybody you see! That's the enthusiasm Mary Magdalene had! The enthusiasm about Jesus' Resurrection. Having seen Jesus, ALIVE just after He had risen from the dead, was the best thing that ever happened to Mary Magdalene. Sure, it's easy to share

news of a good dinner. But the news of Jesus' resurrection? When Mary Magdalene told the Disciples about Jesus' Resurrection, she was enthusiastic.

And now, today, you know Jesus was raised from the dead. You know you are freed from sin. You know He broke the bonds of death once and for all. Will you share the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection with the same joy and enthusiasm Mary did? Or are you already doing it? If not, why not? Paul said it exactly right in 1 Corinthians 15: 1-8, *"Now, brothers and sisters, I want you to remember the Good News I told you. You received that Good News message, and you continue to base your life on it. ² That Good News, the message you heard from me, is God's way to save you. But you must continue believing it. If you don't, you believed for nothing. ³ I gave you the message that I received. I told you the most important truths: that Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures say; ⁴ that he was buried and was raised to life on the third day, as the Scriptures say; ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter and then to the twelve apostles. ⁶ After that Christ appeared to more than 500 other believers at the same time. Most of them are still living today, but some have died. ⁷ Then he appeared to James and later to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, he appeared to me."* Paul was saying, he hopes you will tell it to others.

Henry Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer, and theologian said *The Church is called to announce the Good News of Jesus to all people and all nations. Besides the many works of mercy by which the Church must make Jesus' love visible, it must also joyfully announce the great mystery of God's salvation through the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The story of Jesus is to be proclaimed and celebrated. Some will hear and rejoice. Some will remain indifferent. Some will become hostile. The story of Jesus will not always be accepted. But it must be told. We who know the story and try to live it out, have the joyful task of telling it to others. When our words rise from hearts full of love and gratitude, they will bear fruit, whether we can see this or not.*

Jesus' story must be told! And *you* are the one to be telling it. For 40 days after His death and Resurrection, Christ appeared many times to His followers. On one occasion, He gathered His remaining eleven Disciples on a mountain in Galilee and gave them His Great Commission. He said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always."* (Matthew 28:19-20, NASB). The Resurrection of Jesus Christ ranks as history's *most revolutionary* event. You can't deny He shook up the world in His day. But His life, just as dramatically, has shaped the course of history in our time. The Resurrection is the final proof Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be!

Now, what have you said about it? Have you ever told anybody about it? Just one? If not, why not? Why are you keeping the greatest story that has ever been told to yourself? You should be telling it to your wife, your husband, your children, your grandchildren, your neighbors, your friends.

Have the enthusiasm of Mary. Have the dedication of Paul. Become a missionary for Christ right in your own space where you live. Have the assurance that as you do, Jesus will be with you, always. This Easter Day is a good day to tell everyone you know, *"He is risen!"* AMEN