

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

JOHN 20

¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes. ¹¹ But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent over, looking into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels in white clothes sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She told them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ After she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will get him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and replied in Aramaic, *“Rabboni!”* (which means, “Teacher”).



It must be exhausting to worry so much. I have a friend who constantly runs out of gas on road trips. He knows that when his needle hits the E-line, he still has about 50 miles to go. Then he estimates that if it’s half-way between the line and the actual E, there’s still about 25 miles. Then, when the needle in his car is all the way to the end, he still figures his car is especially generous, and he must have a few miles left. That’s when he gets stuck. In western Minnesota or in the sticks of West Virginia, when this happens, your nerves are shot. But that’s how the guy lives. It must be so exhausting to worry so much.

That was the disciples, both the men and the women. They had been warned Jesus would die, but they still wanted to preserve his life. They set themselves up for failure just because they wouldn’t listen to Jesus’ Word. They weren’t listening and believing when Jesus said something better would happen. They wanted to fill up their own tanks and make God’s kingdom by their own ability.

They were so afraid of living on empty. How about you?

ARE YOU LIVING ON EMPTY?

If so, you may relate to Mary Magdalene, She was such an empty disciple that first Easter day. She looked inside the tomb, even heard the angels' message, and feared that, not only was Jesus dead, but someone had stolen him, maybe marring his body.

She even turned and saw Jesus himself, but not for who he really was. There are some good guesses here why. Was it because Jesus didn't let her recognize him? That's what I've usually thought. He wanted to sort of show her that she didn't know everything. Maybe Jesus wanted to use it as a **teachable moment**, that he meant what he always said and so he could change her life in an instant.

But there's another possibility. **Maybe Jesus' body had changed.** After all, he didn't have a body affected by sin's consequences anymore. He didn't feel worry or tired or pain, too cold or too hot, or hunger or anger or sadness or discomfort. His resurrected, glorious body, since it had gone to death and back, would be in a state that defies the sorrow and consequences of sin. So maybe he looked different.

But while those possibilities may hold a lot of truth, I like another possibility better. **I think that Mary couldn't see Jesus through her tears.** Her vision was blurred by her sadness, and not only that, by her emptiness. Jesus was the man who forgave her wicked sin, called her to follow him forever, renewed her confidence in God, and changed her life. If Jesus was dead, everything was messed up and empty.

So she turned away.

There are things that make us empty in our time. You don't have the latest toys and tech; you can't keep up with the Joneses; you're not body-beautiful like you once were; you don't feel attractive; you work at an unfulfilling job; you don't have many friends—or any friends; you forget that until you pick up the phone and start dialing that friend has gone to heaven.

Throw in a pandemic, and all those empty feelings are magnified to the '*n*th' degree.

It is exhausting to be friendless, faulty, forgetful, behind, and empty. **It is also exhausting to live life needing those things.** It's exhausting doing everything,

stressing everything, and being so stressed just to stay alive. It is exhausting to worry so much.

What if that's not really the game we're playing here? We want to do "what works." Or we say we're "okay if we just survive." What if that's just ... off?

What's so cool in the lesson today is that, with one word of Jesus, her own name, **Mary took a double-take**. What's so joyful is that Jesus can say your name and by his Word, which carries his grace to you, he creates faith. **By his powerful Word**, he makes and builds on your confidence in him. He would have you trust the realization that this isn't all there is and then we're dead and gone and that's it. Instead, he proves that he lives again. If he can live again, you can live again, and if by faith you can live again, this life isn't worth dying for. These things—the latest toys and tech, sibling rivalry, neighbor jealousy, busy calendars, popular friends, unfulfilling jobs—these things aren't worth dying for.

They're also not worth sinning for.

We live for something else. **We live on a different kind of empty**, that is, on the empty tomb. We live on his resurrection. We live on his life again. We live because he lived—not just that he made us and gave us stuff, like life, breath, food, shelter, and luxuries on top of it all—but that he paid for it when we sinned. He died for it when we were helpless. We live by empty, for empty. We live by him and for him.

What if you don't? What if you've looked at Jesus, considered Jesus once upon a time, and he just wasn't doing it for you? Well, friend, **let me invite you to take a double-take at Jesus**. Have a second look at the One who caused the Christian movement, the largest religion in the world, and millions who believe in the resurrection. He had a following of eyewitnesses who didn't want to believe him, people who blundered all over the Bible in embarrassing ways, and then wrote all about it instead of keeping their failures to themselves. They must have seen something that made them believe Jesus lived beyond a doubt, beyond death. After all, they finally taught the faith till they died for it. **Look again at the one who lived again**. If a loving God saw us in our failures and wanted to rescue us, be like us, be perfect for us, and die in our place, isn't this how it would look? If God wanted to prove humble victory and the death of death, if he could rise again, isn't this just what would win the battle for us?

Don't be afraid; don't worry. Take a second look, turn to Jesus, and put your faith in Jesus. Your Easter basket may fill with eggs and money, but when your basket empties, your eggs empty, and your wallet is empty, you *literally can't even*. But if the tomb is empty, then you *literally can even* live after death.

A few years ago my wife and I went to a history museum. They had a cool **Route 66 exhibit**. I learned that in the mid-60s there was a man, named Raymond Dietz, from Texas, who figured out that if you were headed West on Route 66 and you ran out of gas, you were in pretty deep trouble. So he fitted out a Ford open-bed van with a triangular canopy that resembled his gas station; he loaded up the van with car oil, auto parts, and, of course, gas; and he drove around looking for someone on the highways and byways and backroads, just looking for someone on empty. It worked. He found them. He saved stranded lives. It drove people to a sense of gratitude ... and it drove business at his gas station.

Jesus is the same way. He didn't linger in heaven when we foolishly spent our gas. He loaded up a lowly earthly body with humility, **went after us**, seeking us and searching for us, calling for us on the highways and byways and backroads, embracing us, pardoning us, and receiving us again. He fills up our faith when everything around us and inside us is empty, even the battle against death.

Here's my favorite part about this lesson. Do you know what Mary Magdalene said when she took a double-take and realized it was Jesus? She didn't say, "*Rabbi*," a word that's all over the Bible, meaning "Teacher." She said a word hardly ever used, "*Rabbouni*," **my Teacher**. She knew Jesus had come after her personally to give her the resurrection message. He didn't just die for the masses. He died for her. He didn't just pay the price for the Jews, he paid the price for the Gentiles. He didn't just live again for the world back then, he lived again for sinners now. He lives again not just for the people around you listening today; he lives again for you. Don't go it alone. If you go it alone, death will win. But if you trust in Jesus alone, death has no chance, death has no victory, death has no sting. Death itself is empty. That kind of emptiness is not exhausting. That emptiness is something to live on.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.