

Resurrection

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. My name is Graham. I'm the pastor here at the church, and it's a real joy to welcome you to our Easter Sunday service, the day that Christians around the world and down the ages know and celebrate as being the greatest day in history. Now, you might be wondering why on earth would somebody think that? Well, why don't you grab a Bible and come with me to the Gospel of John and to chapter 20. This is where we're going to be this morning.

John chapter 20. And as you're turning there, let me read to you some lyrics taken from one of the best-selling songs that was on one of the best-selling albums that came out in the UK in 2005.

And see if you recognize the song. The lyrics go like this. When the tears come streaming down your face, when you lose something that you can't replace, when you love someone, but it goes to waste. Could it be worse? Fix You by Coldplay. 1.25 million people in the UK apparently bought that single when it first came out. Many more bought the album as well.

1.25 million people. That's a lot of people. Which tells you something, doesn't it, about something of the song. 1.25 million people. That it was resonating deep within human hearts. Let me just ask you as you maybe think on that today. When was the last time that tears came streaming down your face?

We cry for all sorts of reasons, don't we, as human beings? The person who cries tears of jubilation when their team have just won the Premier League. The child who cries tears of pain when they fall off their bike. The parent who cries tears of joy when they have just witnessed the birth of their first child. There's all sorts of reasons that we cry in life.

[2 : 03] but I guess the thing to see is that that song is talking about another type of tears isn't it you know rumor has it that Chris Martin wrote that song to help his wife at the time Gwyneth Paltrow process the death of her father and we know that to be true don't we that's a pain that we all know in our own lives and I imagine it's a pain that that many people around our world at the minute know for themselves right now and maybe it's a pain that you know in your life even as you watch this the tears that we shed when death so cruelly takes from us somebody that we love and we're left with that feeling deep down in our souls that this isn't the way it was supposed to be now whoever you are here today wherever this video catches you whatever you believe about this God the God of the Bible let me just pitch you a question one question to take us through the sermon today and it's in those moments where do you run where do you go as the tears come streaming down your face you see the thing is about the original Easter Sunday just as we tap into John chapter 20 today the curtain opens on this chapter the first Easter Sunday morning and you see how we see a woman who's crying her eyes out in fact you might notice we're told four times if you've got your Bibles there four times in these verses that this lady is weeping she's heartbroken she's distraught she's confused she's inconsolable here is Mary Magdalene now Magdalene's not her surname okay Magdala is the name of the little fishing village where it's most likely she comes from so Mary Magdalene's kind of like her nickname the one that the disciples gave her to differentiate her from the other Marys who were on the scene Mary Magdalene there's all sorts of trashy rumor mill stories that are circulating even today about Mary Magdalene we don't know an awful lot about her and her past but there's one thing we know about her past and it's the fact that she has a very troubled past you see when we first meet this woman in the gospels we're told that demons previously tormented her now whatever that means what we can say is that she was a really poor soul right she was a really troubled soul there was no glittering career prospects ahead for Mary there was no Mr. Darcy coming over the hill to pick her up to take her to the prom there's no provision of a health care system that's going to help her in her time of need there's no knight in shining armor who's coming over the hill who can make things better for Mary that's what she doesn't have but you know what she probably does have she probably does have people in her village thinking that she's the crazy lady every time they see her crossing the road and while the world turned away from Mary from Magdala in her life Jesus turned toward her in compassion and love while the world walked by Jesus reached out and he lifted this woman up he freed Mary from her demons and he forgave Mary of her sin Jesus gave Mary life and flowing from that deep sense of gratitude and love deep within her heart Mary joins the the close circle of disciples who traveled with Jesus on his long journeys and so as we come to

John 20 Mary Magdalene here's what we need to take in about what she's seen she's seen Jesus triumphantly enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday she's standing there by the cross as he's crucified on Good Friday she witnesses his body being taken down and placed in a tomb and she sees the stone that's rolled in front of it and to compound her misery she goes to the tomb early on Sunday morning and that same stone has been rolled away now what Mary probably thinks has happened is that a band of grave robbers have been and gone not uncommon in this day for people to try and rob tombs to try and get the clothes off the body to make a really quick buck so here's Mary and this is where we kick into our verses today at verse 11 right it's early on the first Easter Sunday Mary's outside the tomb and she's bawling her eyes out do you see how she's right there in those cold play lyrics truly she has lost somebody who she can't replace this is her this is where she is and she looks into the tomb and there's two angels inside now notice in the text that they are at either end of where Jesus's body was now given that on the Friday Jesus is crucified with two men on either side of him as he dies on a cross maybe we get a little taste here of what's going on as God the Father is vindicating the work of his son on the cross but Mary sees these angels they ask her why she is crying they've taken my Lord she says and she turns around and she sees the risen Jesus in his resurrection body and it seems that she doesn't recognize his face and verse 15 Jesus asks her do you see it why are you weeping who is it that you are looking for now here's the thing is if you pause and think about it the thing about those questions it's not as if Jesus doesn't know the answer oh it was me you're looking for oh why didn't you just say he knows the answers to these questions so what's going on well here is Jesus lovingly drawing out Mary's heart here and allowing her in this moment to see the earth shattering significance of this moment she doesn't recognize him here's what I love what does she think who does she think he is she thinks he is the gardener which I always think is quite funny right I wonder if if Jesus was carrying a pitchfork and wearing a John Deere tractor sweatshirt

I doubt it on one level maybe so wrong why would she think this and why would it be recorded but on another level whether she meant this or not what she thought was so utterly profound you see the Bible story begins in a garden it's a garden full of abundance and goodness it's a beautiful place which tells us everything that we need to know about the God who created it God put Adam and Eve there to work it to enjoy it to develop it and to steward it for his glory all the while living in that perfect relationship with their creator things are great in fact the things are more than great they are very good and God gives them one rule he says don't eat from that tree and yet the bully the Adam and Eve buy the lie of Satan and they do and chaos reigns as sin enters the human condition sin spreads to every human heart sin is more than just bad behavior the things that you and I do and don't do all the time is deeper than that it's an inner disposition that we all have that wants to reject God doesn't love him doesn't honor him as he deserves to be loved and honored and instead forces our own way and our sin it offends God and it's separated us from him and it's left us deserving to be on the wrong end of his righteous judgment our sin humanity's sin has put us out of the garden separated from God away from him that's mankind's predicament outwith faith in the person and in the work of Jesus and yet here in John 20 what is Mary thinking what is going on the dots are being joined

Mary maybe identifying Jesus as the one who is making a way for there to be as it were a new garden where we can know God's presence through his work knowing the peace of being right with our creator basking in the joy of fully knowing him as we were designed to know him you see Adam's life brought death and guilt for us Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin and brought us life and forgiveness and so as he rises and as God installs him as heaven's king the one to whom all knees will one day bow so the sun rises on a brand new world where all those who in faith would take this Jesus to be their savior and their king would know life eternal with this great

God yes now but gloriously fully one day in this new creation and in that sense Mary's bang on the money Jesus is the gardener par excellence and so it's time for Jesus to reveal himself to Mary and let me just draw out in the remaining time we have left three quick things from these verses which I hope encourage your heart no end this Easter Sunday and so here's the first of these firstly notice how Jesus calls Mary out and I love this this is wonderful see what Jesus calls her do you see how Jesus doesn't go casual he doesn't say hey oi look he doesn't go generic he doesn't say woman he goes personal you see it goes personal Mary he uses her name so lovely in life isn't it when people use our names like in Starbucks when they take your order and they write your name on the side of the cup seeking to add just that little personal touch to it and I've had all sorts of weird and wonderful spellings with

[13 : 27] Graham down the years let me tell you one time it just said on the cup G-R-I-M Grim which if I'm honest perfectly captured my mood that day but they write your name on the cup but as nice as it is they don't know you they don't know me no that's true in life isn't it just because somebody uses your name doesn't mean that they know you but that is not the case with Jesus what's going on here here is the good shepherd in action John chapter 10 Jesus called himself the good shepherd here he is how is he the good shepherd well he knows and he calls his sheep each individually by their name and so contained in this one word is Jesus saying Mary my child I'm here take heart be comforted know that I hold your life in my hands you see that is the kind of relationship that Jesus has with his people he calls us by name and we respond to his voice we know his voice in our lives do you notice that while

Mary doesn't recognize his face she knows his voice here is the good shepherd calling to one of his sheep and saying I'm here and friends you and I can know his voice today as we open the pages of our Bibles and I wonder if some of us need to take great comfort from that truth this Easter Sunday Jesus calls her out secondly notice very quickly that Jesus welcomes her in you see her life might in many ways look insignificant but Jesus wants her to grasp the truth that because of him she is now part of something truly magnificent verse 17 and notice in this little section and what Jesus says here notice the vertical and the horizontal dimensions to what he's saying because Jesus explains to her doesn't he that he's going to ascend and hear the language in his voice he's going to ascend to his father and her father he's going to ascend to his

God and her God and so Mary who was once a stranger to God because of her sin because of what Jesus has done on the cross for her is now beckoned to come and know this wonderful privilege of knowing her creator God as her father in the same way that Jesus knows him as his father what an incredible blessing one that is the right of every single Christian the world over down the ages how dare we use this how dare we call God our father yes because of Jesus Christ and his work for us oh what a wonderful privilege and then you see Jesus telling her that she has to go tell his brothers Jesus' brothers there's a new family relationship being established here so Mary is now part of this new global family of faith as Jesus gathers for himself through the ages a people from all corners of the earth a people from all walks of life a people doing all sorts of different jobs a people with all sorts of different interests a people from all different generations a people from every tribe tongue and nation called to be Jesus' one church and who Jesus says brothers and sisters to incredible privileges

Jesus calling his people out with the express purpose of living for and worshipping him and thirdly notice how Jesus sends Mary on you know there are many privileges in life Maggie who was on just a few moments ago I always remember got chosen last year to go and meet the queen at Buckingham Palace what an incredible privilege that is but even the greatest privilege is nothing compared to the one that is bestowed on Mary here as she becomes the first witness to the risen Jesus what an honor what a privilege and you have to say what a surprise in many ways that Mary would be the first witness but then again this is the God of the Bible he is the God who is in the business of lifting up the humble and casting down the proud the God who uses the weak and the seemingly insignificant things of this world to shame the strong and so the

God who chose the shepherds to be the first messengers of the news about the birth of his son now chooses this Mary who if we're honest has not got a lot going for in many ways except a devoted and a loving heart to be the first herald about the news of his risen son and she runs and she proclaims the theme that has been the anthem of the church down the ages and the one which fuels Christian mission across the globe that Christ is risen he is risen indeed and that is great news that is the gospel that is that the the message that's at the heart of the Christian faith Jesus lived he died he rose and one day he will return the famous words of Christian missionary Jim Elliott he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose and so here is

[20 : 08] Mary Magdalene and we don't know what happened to her after this point you go on Google you'll find all sorts of weird and wonderful attempts at it but the truth is we just don't know but what's almost for certain is that life wouldn't have been all rainbows and unicorns for Mary after this point I mean if you're carrying this message to a world about the guy who the world wanted dead it ain't gonna go well for you I'd imagine imagine that life for her would have been the same as it was for the other disciples who took the message of the risen Jesus to the world it's funny I was reminded of this the other night as I was reading do you know what I was reading I was reading where's Wally with my kids a lad but I was reading where's Wally on one of the pages she had to find Wally in the in the Coliseum in Rome so we're sitting there the three of us looking for him and the girls say to me daddy daddy what does it say at the top and I read to them the caption at the top and it simply read here in Rome are the

Christians being thrown to the lions and so they they're off they're trying to look for Wally they're trying to look for the wizard and I'm struck by that comment and I'm led to think of the first disciples I'm led to think of my brothers and sisters who first carried the torch for Christ because that was the reality for those who follow Jesus sure that would have been the reality for Mary but what's for certain is that Mary would have known pain in her life she would have known the loss of loved ones she would have known herself what it is like to feel that you are on your way out of this world that you are dying she would have died let me ask you where do you run in those moments when the tears come streaming down your face when you lose someone something thing you can't replace when you lose someone but it goes to waste what could be worse where do you go answer the invitation as we look at Mary here and as you look at the risen

Jesus is we have got nowhere else to run but to the man who has defeated death and is alive forever more we are called to run to the risen Jesus Mary's saviour lives he lives you see Mary's not got hope Mary's got Christ and Christ is her living hope and because he died and because he now lives she one day too no matter what happens to her even though she dies will one day live with Jesus forever he is our living hope he is the hope of every single Christian down the ages in this world Jesus Christ crucified risen returning the one who we read at the end of the Bible is the one who will make all things new the one who will wipe away every tear the one who will banish death forever for we will be in God's perfect kingdom kingdom here is Jesus standing victorious having conquered the grave having atoned for our sin here is the lamb that was slain and here is the roaring lion of

Judah who has defeated the power of sin and death and so even in our darkest moments and friends we don't know what's going to happen over the next few months but what we can know is that even in the shadow of the valley of death here is a shepherd who walks close with his people and here is a shepherd who has given his life so that his people could go free and here is a shepherd who even in our darkest moments invites us to come and put our faith in him and join in the chorus the one that's been the anthem of the church down the ages and with this we close it goes like this God sent his son they called him Jesus he came to love heal and forgive he lived and died to buy my pardon an empty grave is there to prove my savior lives because he lives I can face tomorrow because he lives all fear is gone because I know I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives let me pray for us as we close heavenly father we thank you so much for today and that even as we journey through the uncertainty of this life that as we look at the crucified risen and one day returning Jesus we can have hope and so father we ask that you would help us to look to him and have our eyes fixed on him father thank you that you love us and we pray these things in

Jesus's precious and perfect name amen sight of him and three words point I think of him for me for long H