

Same Old Story

John 20:1-18 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes. ¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" 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." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for 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.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"- and that he had said these things to her.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Do you ever get tired of the same old story? Nothing seems to change. The scenery is the same, the path is the same. The characters may change from time to time, but the plot remains the same. The story is Mary Magdalene's. Same old story, walking on the way to the tomb. The story is Peter's, too. Peter who denied ever knowing this Jesus, still on the path to the tomb. The story is John's too, still walking toward the tomb. You can insert your name into the story, too. It's yours, as well. Everything you're naturally inclined to do is just a step toward the tomb.

2 Same old story. Nothing you can do can change this innate tendency to move toward death. No amount of money or free-time can change it. You can't talk yourself into some different course, and no matter how hard you could try to ignore it, something will always jolt you back to the cold, hopeless reality that you're dying. So it only makes sense that Mary and the

other women first suspected that someone had stolen the lifeless body of Jesus. Death is the same old story. Why expect anything different?

3 O foolish women, foolish disciples, did the Lord Himself not promise you He would rise from the dead on the third day? Why are you so stubborn of heart and slow to believe? And their story is still yours, too, isn't it? Despite the goodness you have received from your Lord, don't you still waver and doubt? Despite His assurance to you, don't you still hedge your bets with God, always ready with a backup plan in case the Lord should fail? Don't you prefer like these women and the disciples to believe your eyes instead of what the Lord speaks? So repent.

4 The story is anything but the same. Christ has risen! He lives! He rose victorious over death and the grave. Rejoice, Christian. He was crucified for you, paid the penalty for your sins. He died for you. And now the stone is rolled back, not because grave robbers have taken His body but because He rose. And not some spiritual, other-worldly rising nonsense, this is a real resurrection. His resurrected body has skin and bones and scars from the nails. It's real; it's made of flesh! He lives, not in your heart or your memory, but in His flesh.

5 This is as real as it gets. Your eyes only behold what seems to be the same old story, but this is more than what your eyes can see. This is what your ears can hear. He who is crucified, risen, and ascended is He who promises to return. Though your eyes only see the slow progression toward the grave, your ears hear of life beyond the grave. Though your eyes see the slow decay of your body, your ears hear that the Lord who rose in the flesh will raise your flesh.

6 The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of your own resurrection. As the Lord's baptized children, you have been united with the Lord in His death and also in His resurrection. And, what's more, the Lord continues to guard the faith delivered to you in Holy Baptism by feeding you with His very crucified and resurrected body and blood. "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink," Jesus promises. Though your eyes only see bread and wine, your ears

hear the Lord's words, "This is my body; this is my blood given for you." The very body and blood that left the grave, the very Body and Blood He warned Mary not to touch, this is what is given to you today to eat and to drink.

7 As many times as this story gets told, it will never be the same old story. The good news of your Lord crucified in your place to take the penalty for your sin is the story that's always new. The story of the crucified Lord who rose triumphant over sin and death is the story that makes you new. This Easter story is not a once-upon-a-time story. It is a living and present reality. Jesus lives and gives you life.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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