

**“Why Are You Weeping?”**  
Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18

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**“Why are you weeping?”** This was the question asked to Mary Magdalene by what appeared to be three perfect strangers. We could almost expect a snappy, bitter reply to what seems like a pretty dumb question. *“Why do you THINK I am weeping? I watch my close friend, this amazing miracle-working man of God, suffer an excruciating death by crucifixion just a few days ago, and I come here to pay my respects and mourn his loss, and find him GONE! How SHOULD I be taking this? The better question is why AREN’T YOU weeping?”*

Of course, those three ‘strangers’ weren’t mere ‘strangers.’ They were ones who knew the TRUTH about what had *really* happened to the body of Jesus. No one had ‘taken away’ the body of the Lord to some ‘unknown place.’ Mary would soon find out that Jesus wasn’t gone... He was in fact **right there in front of her**. After she recognized who He was, soon she would go back to the disciples and tell them what she had seen... ‘loudly and proudly’ declaring, **“I have seen the Lord!”** Though it doesn’t say so, I would have to imagine that Mary’s tears of sorrow and bewilderment turned to tears of joy and thanksgiving when she was able to report that ‘happy news’ to her friends.

She ran back to report to them in large part **because Jesus told her to!** Even tho’ she herself was still trying to figure it out. I’m sure that she struggled to get her head around this whole ‘resurrection’ thing. Which is UNDERSTANDABLE! How well can WE fathom this holy mystery? The words use to describe “the other disciple” **(US)** could also be used in reference to Mary: SHE **“saw and believed... for as yet (SHE) did not understand the Scripture.”** (John 20:8)

What Mary DID know was that what had been lost had now been found... her Lord who was dead was now alive. That the agony of the cross had now been replaced by the ecstasy of the empty tomb. Tears of **pain** replaced by tears of **gain**. Her range of emotion... this faithful follower and friend of Jesus... should call into question our own ‘passion’ for Christ. Yes, BOTH meanings of that word that we considered last Palm/Passion Sunday... **love and suffering**. When we consider the anguish and agony that Jesus endured for YOU and ME on the ‘road of sorrows’ to Calvary... as well as the victory over death that waves as a banner over the empty tomb... how REAL is it to us? As we ponder the terrible price the Son paid for us... the anguish

that the Father felt to see His Son PAY that price... that question posed to Mary at the tomb might be rephrased as it is asked of US: **“Why AREN’T you weeping?”**

As we consider the depth of emotion, of attachment, that Mary had to Jesus, and how profoundly she felt the possible loss of that connection... which, at the time she returned to the tomb, the most tangible link she had with Him was the body that was now missing... we would do well to give thought to how OUR ‘connection’ with Christ is? How SERIOUSLY do you and I think about the events of His life... His death... His resurrection? And it is only as we ‘count the cost’ of Jesus’ sacrifice for US that we must in turn ‘count the cost’ of our OWN ‘sacrifice’ for HIM. As we each think of the myriad of ways we have failed to follow our Lord... the ways we have, in our own ways, been just like Judas, or Peter, in betrayal and denial... ‘why AREN’T we weeping?’

It is that inherent NEED we have to get ‘emotional’ about this Christian faith of ours that I believe lies at the heart of the popularity of the Maundy Thursday Service. That service... much more so that the great celebrations of Palm Sunday and today’s Easter Sunday service... points to the intense suffering, the intimacy, the humanity, of our relationship with Christ. It is from that time in the upper room with His disciples, breaking bread, and washing feet... even to the one who would betray him... that began his final journey to that hill on Calvary.

The merciful, compassionate nature of Jesus to all... even his betrayer (fill-in-the blank)... reminds us of the ‘CRUX’ of the Christian faith... FORGIVENESS. Forgiveness that was born (given new birth)... and born-e (carried)... on a CROSS. The word ‘crux’ means ‘cross.’ As we look at the cross before us here in this sanctuary, consider what lay at the very center of that symbol of *death*... an even greater symbol of *life*: the heart of Jesus. With His dying breath, he spoke a message of forgiveness. **“Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.”** (Luke 23:34) Words not spoken simply for the benefit of those who helplessly stood by and watched him die *that day*... but for all of us who stand by helplessly and watch him die *these days*: that a little part of Christ dies when people take his name in vain... when his innocent children suffer... when we turn our back on others. For all the ways we can ignore Christ’s pain...and that of our brothers and sisters... our Lord looks at us, asking, **“why aren’t you weeping?”**

As much as our faith is represented by the **forgiveness** embodied by **Jesus** on that **cross**, however, that is NOT where the story ends, is it? In the words of Luke in our Acts passage, ***“You know the message he (God) sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.”*** (Acts 10:36) Does the message of Christ end ‘peacefully’ on a cross? Hardly! That story continues through a tomb... one that is surprisingly found **empty**. That empty tomb makes a powerful declaration that death and despair, hopelessness and tears would NOT have the final say. Those breathless and bewildered disciples, in finding an empty grave, would come to know that their journey with their Lord would NOT end in despair, but in hope. They would soon come to believe in the truth as later expressed by Paul: ***“For if we are united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his... if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”*** (Rom. 6:5, 8)

When Mary would realize that she was in truth seeing JESUS, not some gardener (tho’ it was an honest mistake... they BOTH are about raising things to life from the ground...), she knew that the cross was NOT the end of life... but rather, a beginning! With tears of joy she could have shared in further words of Paul to the church in Corinth: ***“Where, O death, is your victory... your sting? ...Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Cor. 15:55, 57) That victory over death... that hope from an empty tomb... is the promise offered to you and me as well. If only, in Paul’s word, ***“we believe...”***

**NOW...**for most of you, this ‘Good News’ is not likely ‘new news.’ I hope that most everyone in this room ‘believes’: ‘believes’ in the **truth** of **Scripture**... ‘believes’ in the **forgiveness** of **Jesus** as ‘displayed’ on the **cross**... ‘believes’ in the **hope** of the **empty tomb**, and the **victory over death promised** to those who... ‘believe.’ If you *don’t*...if you have *doubts* about anything I’ve said here today... well, my door is ALWAYS open for you. (Of course, given my ‘itinerant’ status, it might be a *car* door...)

But your ‘belief’ is NOT meant to be kept to yourself. ‘Good news’ is ‘NO news’ unless it is ‘broadcast.’ Otherwise, it’s just ‘fake’ news... Here is the ‘headline’ I want to remind you of from today’s ‘news report’ from Acts, in which Luke writes: **“He (Jesus) commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living**

***and the dead.”(Acts 10:42) We went on to read that <sup>43</sup> “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:43)***

These are not just words for ancient believers in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century... but us modern ones in the Twenty-first Century. We are ‘commanded to preach to the people’... ‘ALL the prophets (are to) testify’... Now you are saying, ‘O, I can’t ‘preach’... I can’t ‘testify’... I’m no ‘prophet.’ Well friends, there’s a popular Christian group with your name on it: “*SIDEWALK PROPHETS.*” In the words of a NOT-so-Christian group, the Doobie Brothers, you and I must be ‘Takin’ it to the Streets’... for JESUS. And, my fellow ‘prophets,’ I can tell you just where part of that ‘sidewalk’ is...‘takin’ in to the streets’ of [LC] Ryan, and Country Club, out to McNeese at Corbina Rd in Mission/MorganField// [W] Hudspeth, N. Adams and Bourgeois, Hwy 190/99.

[LC only] And with regards to that ‘project’ out in S. L.C., some of you know that we received bids last week. And we have our work cut out for us. For the current estimates came in a bit higher than anticipated. // Which means that, more than ever, we are going to need to ‘put our money where our mouth is.’ And not just our **money**. If we are going to take God serious in our belief that, in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, He has a plan... a hope... a future for this church, then we need to put our **mission** and our **ministry** ‘where our mouth is.’ We need to have the name of Jesus not just in our **hearts**, but on our **lips**. Whether to one who has ‘left the fold’ (be they from this ‘holy huddle’ or another one), or a ‘lost sheep’ with no Christian background at all, we MUST take seriously our COMMAND to **preach** and **testify** about the forgiveness and hope that we have in the Risen Christ. How can we expect GOD to ‘invest’ in us unless we are willing to ‘invest’ ourselves in Him? Just as Jesus laid down his life for those he loved, so too are we called to lay down our pride, our fears, our resources...our very LIFE... for those we love...or hardly even know. Recognizing that such sacrifice is not easy...

In speaking of the need to ‘lay down’ ourselves for others, making sacrifices that aren’t easy, I would offer up this name: **Micah Herndon**. You might recognize that name. Micah Herndon was a Marine who began running after returning from a tour in Afghanistan in which he lost two fellow Marines and a British journalist to an IED. To honor their memory, and indeed to represent ALL those veterans who had suffered and/or died, he began to run distance races. He has become somewhat of a celebrity for his acclaimed finish of last week’s Boston

Marathon... finished not on his feet, but on his hands and knees. He particularly runs for those three fallen friends... Mark Juarez, Matthew Ballard, and Rupert Hamer, who would **never** again be **able to run for themselves**... and put their names on his race bib, his **hands**, and his **feet (shoes)**. When asked about how he crawled the last 100 yards to finish the race, he spoke of the Marine adage to "**Adapt and overcome.**"

In that same interview, he spoke openly about his PTSD and Survivor's guilt – "They are my battle **scars**, and **I'm not ashamed** of that." With regards to those three whose death led to that burden of having his own life spared, he said that he repeats their names during training and in races. 'People think I'm crazy.'

In listening to his story, I am reminded of another brave man who took on a race that others could not run. One who carried a deep burden of love for his fellow mankind, not ashamed to speak of the pain and struggles that he carried. And yet a very humble man who put others above self. One who speaks out loud the names of his beloved... indeed, shows his love by marks on his hands and feet. One who didn't let his trials and suffering keep him from the finish line. A man named JESUS. The one whose 'course' took him 'from the cross to the grave... from the grave to the skies'...

As you and I seek to follow in the example of Christ, and other Godly examples like Micah Herndon, let us remember those words of Hebrews: "**Let us run with perseverance the race set before us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.**" (Heb. 12:1-2) My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us indeed... and 'in-word' ... 'run with perseverance the race set before us.' ...Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. As we consider the **pain** of His suffering... and just as importantly, the **joy** of His salvation... our Lord says to us, '**Why AREN'T you weeping?**'

CHARGE: In hearing the story of that persevering ex-Marine, I would offer to you some Christian 'modifications' of some of his words: Instead of 'survivor's *guilt*,' because of the life we have been given by the One who took our place, may we have 'survivor's **gratitude.**' Gratitude for a different type of 'PTSD': the '**Promise Through the Savior's Death.**' Let us too 'Adapt and Overcome': that as we 'Adapt' our ways to **Jesus**, through Him you and I will 'Overcome.' As we go out into a world preaching this message of 'Adapt and Overcome' in Jesus, we do NOT go alone...