

Sunday 22nd July 2018
St Mary Magdalene

Trinity 8

White



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son restored Mary Magdalene to health of mind and body and called her to be a witness to his resurrection: forgive our sins and heal us by your grace, that we may serve you in the power of his risen life; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

2 Corinthians 5:14-17 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Ministry of Reconciliation

5¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.^[a] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Footnotes: a. or *creature*.

COMMENT: Despite this clear message from Paul, about regarding no-one according to the flesh, even Christians lived in a world where titles matter – The Right Reverend for a Bishop; The Very Reverend for a Dean; The Reverend for a Clergyman. These titles are in fact of recent use. In the sixteenth century and before a Clergyman with a Bachelor’s degree was prefixed “Sir”. A Priest with a Master’s degree was pre-fixed Master – as in “Master James Beaton, Archbishop of St Andrews;” – and a Clergyman with a Doctorate was prefixed “Dr”. The word “Minister” reflects a more humbler usage meaning Servant – following the call from the Lord to be servants to one another – Matthew 20:26 – although in politics the word “Minister” means high office! Of course the thrust of Paul’s message is that in Christ we are new creatures – and should live as servants of our Lord.

John 20:1-2 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Resurrection

20 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.”

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

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, ^[a] “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.

Footnotes: a. or *Hebrew*.

COMMENT: For many centuries the most obsessively revered of saints, this woman became the embodiment of Christian devotion, which was defined as repentance. Yet she was only elusively identified in Scripture, yet with sufficient detail onto which a succession of fantasies has been projected. In one age after another her image was reinvented, from prostitute to sibyl to mystic to celibate nun to passive helper to the present day feminist icon.

The only record of her existence is in the New Testament. She was a woman from whom Jesus cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2). The name Magdalene likely indicates that she came from Magdala, a city on the southwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. She became one of the women who ‘ministered’ to Jesus and supported the mission financially; Mark 15:40-41, Luke 8:3.

With certainty she was one of the women who witnessed Jesus’ burial, and along with other women reported the empty tomb. Matthew provides a meeting between the risen Lord with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (Matt 28:9). It is a cursory meeting, which encourages the women to continue with their task, at the very point where they fail in Mark’s Gospel written some 10 years earlier than Matthew. The author of John’s Gospel writing at least 10-15 years after Matthew’s Gospel, singles out Mary Magdalene for this meeting. From this some present day feminists argue that Mary Magdalene was the first of the Apostles commissioned by our Lord to take the message of his Resurrection to the eleven disciples. The Apostle to the Apostles as she is sometimes called. Mary of Magdalene alone comes to the tomb in the dawn darkness of the first day of the week (as noted in the three other Gospels she is one of a number of women). She finds the tomb empty,

and runs to tell Peter and the Beloved Disciple. She does not tell them that the Lord is risen – a fact of which, at that point, she remains ignorant. Peter and the Beloved Disciple run to the tomb. The first to see the displaced grave clothes is the Beloved Disciple; but the first to enter is Peter. The first testimony to resurrection faith is that of the Beloved Disciple. ‘He saw and he believed.’ The encounter of Mary with her risen Lord, beautiful and compelling as it is, with its solemn charge to tell the brethren that ‘I ascend to my Father...’ is subsequent to the revelation of the resurrection to Peter and the Beloved Disciple. That presumably is why Mary’s declaration is about the Lord’s Ascension, not about his rising from the dead. Mary, of course, is famously the lone figure at the tomb in John’s account; but John does not make her the messenger of the Resurrection to the disciples, or for that matter to anyone else. The Risen Lord gives her instructions to tell ‘my brethren’ about his forthcoming Ascension – but not the Resurrection or the empty tomb, about which they already know.

Psalm 42:1-8 *Quemadmodum* Grail Psalter

℟ My soul is thirsting for God, the God of my life.

¹ *For the Choirmaster. A Psalm of David*

² Like the deer that yearns
for running streams,
so my soul is yearning
for you, my God. ℟

³ My soul is thirsting for God,
the God of my life;
when can I enter and see
the face of God? ℟

⁴ My tears have become my bread,
by night, by day,
as I hear it said all the day long:
“Where is your God?” ℟

⁵ These things will I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I would lead the rejoicing crowd
into the house of God,
amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving,
the throng wild with joy. ℟

⁶ Why are you cast down, my soul,
why groan within me?
Hope in God; I will praise him still,
my saviour and my God. ℟

⁷ My soul is cast down within me
as I think of you,
from the country of Jordan and Mount Hermon,
from the Hill of Mizar. **R**

⁸ Deep is calling on deep,
in the roar of waters;
your torrents and all your waves
swept over me. **R**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: In this psalm the poet laments a deep spiritual depression caused by his sense of absence from the LORD's presence (verse 3). It could have been an actual absence from Jerusalem and the homeland of Israel where participation in temple festivals was once possible. Verse 6 appears to suggest that the exact location was near the sources of the Jordan on Mount Hermon, possibly in enemy hands at the time. Wherever the psalmist was, he expresses distress at conflict in his community (verse 4). Scoffers took the present circumstances as evidence that the LORD had deserted Israel or that there really was no god at all. The psalmist's memories of joining the throng of worshipers processing to the temple elicited great pain (verse 5). Yet the psalmist hoped that he will eventually have reason to praise the LORD once again within the temple. The idea that he could worship anywhere else had occurred to him (verse 7), but like many modern folk, it just didn't seem to the same. We all like to worship in familiar surroundings.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks that your glory is revealed in St Mary Magdalene and all the saints. In their lives you have given us an example of faithfulness to Christ. In their holiness we find encouragement and hope. In our communion with them we share the unity of your kingdom.

Post Communion

God of life and love, whose risen Son called Mary Magdalene by name and sent her to tell of his resurrection to his apostles: in your mercy, help us, who have been united with him in this Eucharist, to proclaim the good news that he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

God give you grace to follow his saints in faith and hope and love; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**