

Bible Study Notes for Small Groups WB 14th April '24

We begin a new theme called
Resurrection People, Encounters with Risen Jesus

This week we are looking at
Mary Magdalen

We are in the season of Easter. We have gone through Good Friday and *we approach Easter Day with the excitement and joy afforded us because we have hindsight.* We know what happens next. But for the disciples and followers of Jesus it was a different story.

John 20:11-18

Imagine the women's broken hearts, their sadness and their tears. To their horror, as they approach the tomb, they see that someone has already opened it. They must have thought that Jesus' tomb had been vandalised adding to their heartache. Those of us who have experienced the death of a loved one will know about the turmoil of emotions that arise when nearing the grave or going into the church or crematorium for the funeral.

- Can you imagine your feelings if you thought some unknown person had disturbed the grave of a dearly loved person?

Mary of Magdala cannot come to terms with what she is seeing. She looks inside the tomb to try to get her thoughts straight. But Jesus really is not there. Instead, two men dressed in white are sitting on the slab where Jesus' body had been put. And to add insult to injury they ask why she is crying. She answers them straight away and straight away turns around.

- Do you ever wonder what her tone of voice may have been as she answered the two men?

As soon as she turns round Jesus is standing in front of her but she doesn't recognise Him. *Her grief is so great and her tears so many that she can't see properly,* she can't get her head around what had happened and she wasn't expecting it to be Jesus so she thinks it is the gardener.

- If you'd feel OK answering this one.....If you have not realised that Jesus was with you or near to you when you were upset, what had taken you to that point, what was your reaction, what were your thoughts?

It only takes one word from Jesus and Mary is brought into the reality of what is going on. He says her name. She knows His voice so well. She had received freedom and grace from Him so many times during His ministry with His followers. His voice is unmistakable to her.

We are all able to recognise Jesus when He says things and does things we are expecting of Him. As we go through our life of faith, we get to know what to expect from Him but this was unexpected for Mary. Someone once said **‘Beside each one of us sits a pool of tears.’** We all have our hurts, our pain, our regrets and sorrows. They are particular to us and *Mary’s hurt can resonate with us.* She only recognised His voice because she had spent lots of time with Him up to that point. She was so happy with this turn around of events she obviously rushed to hug Him. She had gone from pain to happiness because He called her by name.

Three points from this account.....

1] Jesus asks Mary a question. He doesn’t try to fix her; he uses no pat phrases. He gives her permission to put her pain into words. *Jesus asks the same question to us* and we would be wise to avail ourselves of the permission to do the same. Our culture expects men not to do this so it’s even harder for them.

- How can we hear Jesus asking this question?

2] Mary puts her pain into words; she opens up to Him giving Him access into a painful part of her life. Then He can heal and deal with it. **His love holds, reassures, and makes changes in lives with His mercy and grace. When we say we are fine when we are not, this blocks that stream of healing and grace.**

- In what ways are we able to speak out our pain to Jesus?
- What is our reaction when someone hurting wants to tell us about it?

3] Mary is given a ministry out of her tears. When Jesus says her name everything changes. As Jesus died, she lost her identity and purpose in life. *Now Jesus has given her a new identity and purpose*, to tell the news of His resurrection to anyone who is willing to listen.

- Since entering the life of faith in Jesus can you see your new purpose and identity that you have been given?

The open tomb allows us to peer in and see the truth. Jesus is not there He is risen and He can do the same for us that He did for Mary. **Mary arrived in sadness and left in joyfulness.**

You may wish to pray for each other now or spend time at home talking to Jesus and allowing Him to heal, deal, change or commission you afresh.