

“Mary Encounters Jesus: A Journey from Grief and Grace” – John 20:11-18

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take a Bible and let's meet in John, chapter 20...

We are so glad that you could join us today, this Easter Sunday, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen, we are a people who are defined not only by a cross, but by a resurrection. If there was no resurrection, the cross would have been emptied of its significance. We would have no hope or place with God. The resurrection is absolutely essential to our salvation. Without it, everything crumbles. With it, we have hope beyond the grave.

One of my favorite aspects of the resurrection accounts in the Scriptures are the personal encounters that the risen Christ has with individuals and groups. There is much to be learned in these encounters. And I want to examine one with you this week and next. It involves a woman called Mary Magdalene. James Montgomery Boice once claimed, “If there is any story in all literature more poignant than the story of Mary Magdalene’s meeting with Jesus in the garden on the first Lord’s day, I do not know what it is.”¹ He’s got a point. This is a beautiful story. A touching account of love. The choir has already given us a sense of that this morning and, more importantly, we have already heard the text read over us. Therefore, I’d like for us now to progress through it slowly, piece by piece, feeling the drama and suspense as it unfolds on the page. Take a look at your Bible and follow along.

The first verse of the chapter sets the stage for us...

“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.” (John 20:1)

The first day of the week would be Sunday. Jesus was crucified on Friday, so this scene takes place three days later. Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb of Jesus early in the morning. The other Gospel writers suggest that she was not alone. There were other women with her, but John opts to focus on Mary Magdalene’s experience.

To begin, we should ask who is Mary Magdalene?² There are several people named “*Mary*” in the New Testament, but this particular “*Mary*” refers to a woman who came from a Galilean village known as Magdala, which was located on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee, north of Tiberius. We know from other New Testament writers that she was one of the women who followed Jesus during His ministry. You might remember that she had formerly been demon-possessed until the Lord delivered her and restored her sanity (Luke 8:1-3). From that day on she joined other women who traveled with Jesus, ministering to Him even as He was ministering to others (Matt. 27:55). Like so many, she clearly loves Jesus. How could you not after experiencing the grace and deliverance that she had? In John’s Gospel the first time we see her is actually at the crucifixion of Jesus (19:25). Imagine the courage it took to be present at the execution of Jesus. Most of His disciples were in hiding by now. Mary Magdalene was there, watching His agony, hearing His labored breathing, witnessing the moment of His death.

That was Friday. Saturday has come and gone. And then comes Sunday. Why had she (and the other ladies mentioned elsewhere) come to the tomb this Sunday morning? We are told in Mark that they come to contribute to Jesus’ burial, which suggests either “that Jesus’ burial on Friday was done in haste [because they would have had to pause the effort to observe the Sabbath] or that the women did not know about the preparations

completed by Joseph and Nicodemus. (19:40).”³ Now that the Sabbath has just concluded, they are coming to make sure Jesus’ body has been laid to rest with the utmost dignity. Yet when they arrive, before they have a chance to ask someone to move the heavy stone that seals the tomb, they discover that the stone has already been rolled away. That’s no small feat. It must have been a coordinated effort.

Immediately Mary draws the conclusion that someone has stolen the body. The other women go to the tomb, Mary bolts. She’s more concerned about getting help because of grave robbers than she is about the grave robbed.⁴ Look at verse 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.’” (John 20:2)

Talk about a distressing situation. Mary had already geared up for a difficult morning, fully expecting to “embalm a two-day-old, dead, and crucified” loved one,⁵ only to be met with a sight that leads her to conclude that the grave had been plundered. “The loss of the body is the final indignity, the last straw; even her mourning for Jesus is violated.”⁶ Imagine her emotions in that moment. “What extra scandal is this? Can they not even let him be now that he is dead?”⁷

Let me point out a few things that are worth noting when it comes to the historicity of this text. First of all, it’s not uncommon for people to compare the Gospel accounts of the events of Jesus’ resurrection and come to the conclusion that they contain contradictions. This is one example. Other writers mention a few women arriving that morning, but John only mentions Mary. “Aha,” they say, “a contradiction.” Well, not really. In truth, there are differences in the recorded narratives, but there are not contradictions. They are not mutually exclusive details. In fact, we would expect there to be differences of this sort in the records because they come from different perspectives, not a coordinated effort to get a story aligned. But the differences can easily be harmonized and I’m not going to spend all our time on that this morning because that information is readily available. But I will point out one example.

Notice the “we” in her conclusion—“*we do not know where they have laid him.*” So John is fully aware that Mary had company that day. He’s not contradicting the other accounts. He’s focusing on one aspect of the story, the role of Mary. The other ladies stay and have an encounter with angels. But Mary chooses not to enter the tomb, but instead runs to inform Peter and “*the other disciple,*” which would appear to be John, that someone seems to have removed the body of Jesus.⁸

And notice, second, that no one is drawing the right conclusion. Despite having been around Jesus and heard His teaching, even some teaching on His resurrection presumably, it never seemed to lodge in their brains. They are not expecting Jesus to be alive. Mary didn’t come to the tomb, see the stone rolled away, and then reason, “Oh yeah, didn’t Jesus tell us once that He was going to come back to life?” No, she concludes, “Something’s wrong. Someone stole the body!” And the disciples don’t show up on the third day waiting for a resurrection. They are defeated. Jesus died. It’s over in their mind. They’re not hyping themselves up to expect a resurrection. That’s not even on their radar. Their worldview may have been different than many today, but the idea of a resurrection was not any more palatable to their intellect than it is to modern man.

Additionally, if someone wanted to make up this story and put it on paper, this would be a crummy way to script it in the first century. Why? Because the initial eyewitnesses of the empty tomb, according to all the of the Gospels, were women. It’s pretty well known that the testimony of women in the first century was not very well-regarded. They were generally not considered credible in a legal setting. A Jewish historian by the name of Flavius Josephus, for example, laid out some guidelines for admissible testimony which included the statement: “Let not the testimony of a woman be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex” (*Antiquities* IV.8.15).⁹ Obviously, I don’t share that view. But that kind of thinking was common in this day. This is why one apologist concluded,

“...given their low social status and inability to serve as legal witnesses, it’s quite amazing that it is *women* who are the discoverers of and principal witnesses to the empty tomb! If the empty tomb story were a legend, then the male disciples would have been made to be the ones who discover the empty tomb. The fact that women, whose testimony was deemed worthless, were the chief witnesses to the fact of the empty tomb can only be plausibly explained if, like it or not, they actually *were* the discoverers of the empty tomb, and the gospels faithfully record what for them was a very embarrassing fact.”¹⁰

And it wasn’t just the discovery of the empty tomb. The initial eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus was also a woman. And not just a woman, but Mary Magdalene, a former demoniac. She was a crazy lady, the kind of person who gets locked up and isolated from society today, until Jesus delivered her. She’s a woman and a woman with a past that is not very reputable. But she’s going to be the first eyewitness. From a historical vantage point this is a very unusual feature of the story. As N. T. Wright summarizes: “If someone in the first century had wanted to invent a story about people seeing Jesus, they wouldn’t have dreamed of giving the star part to a woman. Let alone Mary Magdalene.”¹¹ This is not expected and very countercultural. But very consistent with Christianity, which constantly elevates women from the cultural norm. “For God to determine that a woman should be the resurrection’s first witness gives women a credibility and honor that is intrinsic to biblical Christian faith.”¹²

So how do Peter and John respond to Mary’s distressing news? Look at verse 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.” (John 20:3-4)

I love the fact that John, the author of this account, “ensures that it is recorded for posterity that he ran quicker than Peter and got to the tomb first.”¹³ But that’s not really the point of the text. John is merely contrasting the different reactions. And he also is quick to note that Peter was the one who ventured into the tomb first.¹⁴ Look at verse 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.” (John 20:5-7)

My oh my, what tidy grave-robbers these must have been. No, of course not! If you were going to rob a grave you’d go in and out as quickly as possible. You wouldn’t remove all the burial garbs and fold them nicely, just to carry a naked and bloody man out with you. Keep reading in verse 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.” (John 20:8-10)

Now the story shifts our attention back to Mary. Peter and John have departed. Mary has arrived again at the tomb. But evidently they don’t cross paths. So what brings her back? Her love. Her grief. She’s acting out “one of the oldest dramas in the world”, the loved one at the grave, weeping, alone, uninformed.¹⁵ Look at verse 11 and following...

“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.’” (John 20:11-13)

This is not the first mention of angels in this book, but it is the first time that they “participate as characters.”¹⁶ They ask Mary, “*why are you weeping?*” What a question. Bruce Milne writes,

“From the perspective of heaven nothing is more incongruous than tears at the empty tomb of Jesus. If there is one place in space and one moment in time when tears are least appropriate, it is at the empty tomb of Jesus on Easter morning!”¹⁷

Of course, they know something she doesn’t. She is still burdened with the impression that the body has been stolen. She tells them that this is the cause of her tears. Her grief is blinding her to concede any other explanation. Greg Gilbert, in a book called *Who Is Jesus?*, invites us to...

“...pause for a second and take this in: even after all that had happened—the stone rolled away, the empty tomb, the angels telling them Jesus wasn’t here among the dead—Jesus’s closest followers were not quick to believe that he had come back to life. They were *miles away* from the gullible saps they’ve sometimes been made out to be. For crying out loud, Mary Magdalene even looks into the face of an angel and tells him that *her opinion* is that someone has moved the body!”¹⁸

She looks at the empty tomb and sees only occasion for grief. She doesn’t realize that it will soon be the triumphant symbol of God’s grace. And the location of the angels—“*sitting where the body of Jesus was lain, one at the head and one at the feet*” (20:12)—may itself hint at the significance of what has taken place. Why even mention these details? Most commentators don’t really give it much thought. Obviously the presence of the angels and their seating choice may simply be to underscore that the tomb is empty, but John has already made that point in the previous verses. Perhaps there is more to it.

Some interpreters have suggested that there may be some symbolism at work in these curious details. Augustine suggested that the location “signified that the gospel of Christ was to be preached from head to foot, from the beginning to the end.” That seems like a stretch, but is pretty typical of Augustine, who seems to find a metaphor or allegory in every verse. Similarly, Thomas Aquinas believed these two angels stood for “the two testaments and the two natures of Christ.” But there really is no support in the text for such interpretations.¹⁹

But there is another possibility, which I first encountered in the work of Edward Klink, that I think may have good support in the biblical narrative. Klink points out that...

“The location of the angels at each end of the place where Jesus had been lying intends to signify the angels at the two ends of the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. The narrative’s emphatic particularity of the location of the angels in relationship to the place where Jesus had been lying is remarkable in its resemblance to the instructions given to Moses regarding the ark: ‘Make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends’ (Exod 25:18–19; cf. Exod 37:1–9).”

It’s worth remembering that John loves to echo temple imagery throughout this book. He sees Jesus as the fulfilment of the temple—its structure, instruments, and rituals—so it would not be surprising if John means to underscore the parallels between the empty tomb, where the body of Jesus was previously placed, and the Ark of the Covenant, which was associated with the presence of God, behind the curtain, in the holiest place of the Jewish temple. That Ark had two angels atop it as well. And what was in between? “The mercy seat” or “the place of propitiation” (the removal of God’s wrath), where the blood of atonement was sprinkled. Luther translated the famous expression from Exodus 25 “the throne of grace” (der Gnadenthron). Is it possible that John wants his readers to make a similar connection?

Klink offers five reasons that it’s not only possible, but also quite likely:

- First, there is a spatial relationship between the location of the ark and the body of Jesus. The ark was in the innermost chamber of the tabernacle and separated by a veil (Exod 40:3, 21); Jesus's body was placed in a burial chamber and separated by a rock and a veil-like "face cloth" (20:7).
- Second, the occurrence of shared terms like "take/carry" and "put/place/lay" serve to create a conceptual relationship, with the latter having a significant role in the plot of both John 20 (vv. 2, 13, 15; cf. 19:41–42) and Exodus 40 (vv. 2–3, 5–6, 22, 24, 26, 29).
- Third, both locations/objects involve the use of spices as an act of anointing or consecration: the ark (Exod 30:26) and the body of Jesus (12:3; 19:39).
- Fourth, just as the Jews with respect to the sanctuary were forbidden to "go in to look at the holy things, even for a minute, or they will die" (Num 4:20), both the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene are hesitant to enter the tomb. In a related manner, just as there is the prohibition not to "touch the holy things or they will die (Num 4:15), so Mary Magdalene will shortly be commanded not to touch Jesus (v. 17).
- Fifth, there is a conceptual relationship between the ark and the resurrected Christ in that both express the idea of glory. Just as the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35) and appeared to Moses between the cherubim on the ark (Exod 25:22; 29:43), so also is the resurrection one aspect of Christ's "glorification." This is most clearly explained by the narrator in 12:16: "At first the disciples did not understand these things, but when Jesus was glorified then they remembered," which nicely parallels 2:22, which explicitly refers to the resurrection...²⁰

From this evidence Klink concludes that the context and the "cumulative weight of these links strongly suggests" that John intends a deliberate allusion. And he's not the only one to make this suggestion. Richard Phillips describes the scene as "a living image of the ark of the covenant".²¹ Similarly, James Hamilton and writes,

"It is as though the place where the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb has become the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place, overshadowed by cherubim on either side (cf. Ex. 25:10–20). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest of Israel took the blood of a slain bull and goat, entered the Most Holy Place, and sprinkled the blood over the mercy seat to make atonement for the Holy Place, cleansing the tabernacle (Lev. 16:14–16). Now these two angels station themselves at the fulfillment of the mercy seat, where the true blood of atonement was sprinkled, blood that cleanses what the tabernacle and temple symbolized: the whole world."²²

If this is the right way to look at the scene—as a picture of Jesus fulfillment of the Most Holy Place and its implements—then Mary entrance into the tomb would be a startling disconnect from what we are used to in the Old Covenant, where only the high priest could enter and interact with the holy of holies, now pictured by the tomb. "It is as though this scene enacts the way that the crucified body of Jesus has opened the new and better way for us to go behind the veil (Heb. 10:20), entering the presence of God." If the high priest just broke into the Most Holy Place, he would die. But Mary enters in with no trouble or threat, because Jesus has pierced the veil. The presence of God can now be accessed, through the atoning blood of Jesus.²³ The angels are no longer there to guard and destroy. They're there to direct our crying eyes to Jesus. And that's precisely what happens here. After the exchange between these angels and Mary, something incredible happens. Look at verse 14...

"Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus."
(John 20:14)

Oh, the suspense! She doesn't recognize Him. Perhaps her tears have clouded her senses.²⁴ In fact, she confuses Jesus with the help. Keep reading...

"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.'" (John 20:15)

Don't you just love this verse. Mary is talking to Jesus and asking if He moved the body. Well, yeah, ironically, He did. Up from the grave He arose. But she, confusing Him for the gardener, has something more sinister in mind. Could this man be the source of her grief? Not for long. Look at verse 16, my favorite verse of the story.

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to him in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher)." (John 20:16)

Don't you just love that? He speaks her name and she sees Him for who He is. She is searching for Him, but she would never find Him unless He allows her to see. Left to her own devices, "she is completely obtuse to spiritual reality."²⁵ Completely blind. And this serves as a "cautionary tale" for all of us. When she sees Jesus, she sees an enemy. Someone who wants to take something away from her. It's not until Jesus opens her eyes that she can finally see the One she has been searching for. Ours is not a salvation of us finding Him. Ours is a salvation of Him finding us.²⁶

And in this case, her eyes are opened with a word. "*Mary*." That's all it took.²⁷ He draws us to Himself personally. By name. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. And as we learn in chapter 10, "*he calls his own sheep by name*" and "*the sheep follow him, for they know his voice*" (10:3-4; cf. 10:16, 27; 18:37).²⁸ She cries out "*Rabboni*". Teacher. Notice the order. It's not "Teacher" and then "Hi, Mary." It's "Mary" and then her eyes are opened to say "Teacher!" The old hymn had it right:

'Tis not that I did choose thee,
for, Lord, that could not be;
this heart would still refuse thee,
hadst thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me
hast cleansed and set me free;
of old thou hast ordained me,
that I should live to thee.

'Twas sov'reign mercy called me
and taught my op'ning mind;
the world had else enthralled me,
to heav'nly glories blind.
My heart owns none before thee,
for thy rich grace I thirst;
this knowing, if I love thee,
thou must have loved me first.

Salvation, brothers and sisters, is always by grace. God alone deserves the glory. Mary knew this. She was enslaved to demons, but Jesus set her free. She was standing before the Resurrected Lord, and He called her by name so she could see Him. What a Savior! What grace! What power to turn the tomb of grief to the place of grace. He turned her tears of sadness into tears of joy. This is the way of Jesus. This is the power of His work and Gospel. This is one of the great blessing of Easter, of the Resurrection of Jesus—it can turn our grief into joy. "If Jesus is alive and not dead, then all who trust in Him have a supreme reason to rejoice."²⁹ Has anyone said it better than the Apostle Peter?

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” (1 Peter 1:3)

Notice how Peter connects the believer’s new birth—the notion of being “born again” when we trust in Christ as Savior and Lord—with the resurrection. You can’t have one without the other. Here’s the rest of the paragraph...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:3-9)

Don’t you love that line, “joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”? That can be ours in Christ. That’s “what awaits all those who confront their grief and trials with the reality of the resurrection and eternal inheritance we have through Christ.”³⁰ Therefore, Thabiti Anyabwile asks the right question...

“Would you be happy and full of joy in this life and the life to come? Embrace and remember the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead and keeps our inheritance in heaven by His power. He puts our joy safely beyond the reach of all our enemies, including death. If you would know pure joy, trust that Jesus has done it all.”³¹

Take away the resurrection and there would be no Gospel, no good news. Christ’s death would have proved meaningless. That’s not my opinion. That’s what the Bible states unequivocally.

“...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:17-19)

But you know the opposite is true, since Christ has been raised. Every sinner who rests their faith in the atoning work of Christ will no longer have their sins counted against them. Every believer who passes from this earth, will pass into the life eternal with God. Our faith is not futile. We have hope. Joy inexpressible and full of glory awaits all who trust in Christ alone as their only hope in life and death.

So how should you respond? Jesus answered that for us. He said, “*Repent and believe the Gospel*” (Mark 1:15). As John said earlier in this book, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:16). Believe. Faith. Turn from your sin and trust in Christ alone—what He has accomplished in His death and resurrection and *not* what you have attempted by your efforts—and you will be saved. Forgiven. Adopted. Counted as righteous in Christ. In light of this good news, how should you respond? Again, Jesus says, “*Repent and believe the Gospel.*”

I like what Greg Gilbert says,

“...you rely on him to save you when there’s no way you’ll be able to save yourself. It means that you recognize that you have no hope on your own of standing before God and enduring the sentence of death

that rightly stands against you., much less earning a righteous verdict when he looks at your life's record. But then it also means that Jesus *has already* exhausted that death sentence on behalf of sinners just like you, that he *has already* earned the righteous verdict that you need, and that your only hope is to rely on him—100 percent—to stand in your place as your substitute.”³²

That is the invitation of the Gospel. Trust in Christ. Trust in the saving Substitute that the Lord has provided. Trust in the risen Lord. The only question that remains is “will you fall on your knees before him in acknowledgement, and trust him to stand in your place under God’s judgment—or whether you will decide to stand under that judgment on your own.”³³ So as always, I commend Christ to you. Trust in Him. You won’t regret it in the end. For even when the tears of grief flow (and for good reason), they will not be without hope. And hope in Christ does not disappoint.

Mary learned that on this day. To Mary the empty tomb started as a source of grief. But when she came to see and embrace the risen Lord, it became a source of great joy. And on this Resurrection Sunday, the same can be true for you. Trust in Christ. He lives today. And He alone can save. And all God’s people said? “Amen!”

Next time I want us to look deeper into this passage. There is more to see. For starters the next verse is one of most challenging to understand in the entire Bible. We also can discover that Mary spoke far better than she realized. There is something to be learned about the life that results from having a saving encounter with Jesus. And there’s something that can be learned about the kind of people God uses, which just might surprise you. So I hope you’ll join us next week too. We do this every week.

Let’s pray...

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 1569-1570.

² “We do not know a great deal about Mary of Magdalene. But we must be careful to distinguish what we do know from those spurious details that have been added to the account by years of tradition. The Bible tells us that Mary had been the object of Christ’s special grace, and that he had sent seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2). For no sound reason at all, church tradition identified her with the unnamed sinner of Luke 7, who anointed the feet of Jesus in the house of a wealthy Pharisee—probably because Mary of Bethany later did the same thing in the house of Lazarus, and there was a confusion of these two accounts and the two Marys. After this she was assumed to have been a prostitute before Christ saved her, and by the seventeenth century ‘Magdalene’ was being used as a word to describe a reformed prostitute. We do not know whether this was her case or not. But Christ had saved her from something terrible, and she had learned to love him. Jesus said that the one who has been forgiven much, loves much (Luke 7:47). This was true of Mary. Thus, earlier in Jesus’ ministry we learn that she ministered to him out of her substance (Luke 8:3), and we find that at the end she is still trying to do this by anointing his body.” Ibid., 1571.

³ Gary M. Burge, *John* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 552-553.

⁴ Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Captivated: Beholding the Mystery of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 62.

⁵ Greg Gilbert, *Who Is Jesus?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 120.

⁶ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 291.

⁷ Josh Moody, *John 13-21 For You: Revealing the Way of True Glory* (Good Book Company, 2019), 132.

⁸ Milne comments, “It is a significant indicator of the strength of Peter’s personality that she goes to him despite the disgrace of his public denials of Jesus.” Milne, 289-290.

⁹ William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (David C. Cook, 2010), 228. Cf. Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 9:10; 42:1-5; *Leviticus Rabbah* 10:5.

¹⁰ Craig, 228-229.

¹¹ N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 147.

¹² Moody, 132.

¹³ Ibid., 132-133.

¹⁴ Ibid., 133.

¹⁵ Wright, 145.

¹⁶ Edward W. Klink III, *John* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 841.

¹⁷ Milne, 291.

¹⁸ Gilbert, 122.

¹⁹ Klink, 841-842.

²⁰ These were reformatted, but quoted verbatim from Klink, 842-843.

²¹ Richard D. Phillips, *John* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014), 636. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 73.

²² James M. Hamilton Jr., “John” in *John-Acts* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 295-296.

²³ Ibid., 295-296. Similarly, Klink writes: “The narrative offers a powerful counter to Mary’s grief at the tomb with the symbolic ‘impression’ of the ark of the covenant from the OT (Exod 25:18–19) created by the specific placement of the angels at the head and feet of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. Without even speaking, the angels’ carefully described positions declare that Jesus is the fulfillment and replacement of Judaism. Even more, their presence declares that Jesus is the full manifestation of the saving power and presence of the Lord. The irony of ironies is that this tomb has become the new holy of holies, for with this symbolism Jesus is depicted as both the atoning sacrifice of God and the one who ‘sits enthroned between the cherubim’ (Ps 99:1; emphasis added). Rather than being empty, the tomb serves as the ark of the new covenant, ‘the throne of grace.’ Golden angels were not capable of adorning this holy of holies; this place of atonement required angels not made by human hands (cf. Acts 17:24–25). The words of the prologue regarding Christ have now been made even more concrete: Jesus is ‘grace in place of grace’ (1:16).” Klink, 850.

²⁴ “As so often in the resurrection narratives, Jesus is not immediately recognized. The couple on the Emmaus road were ‘kept from recognizing him’ (Lk. 24:16), and the long ending of Mark says he appeared to them ‘in a different form’ (Mk. 16:12); the disciples in the boat on the lake of Tiberias did not recognize the man on the shore (Jn. 21:4); Mary did not realize that it was Jesus. In this instance, it is possible that Mary was blinded by tears. Taken as a whole, however, the resurrection accounts provide a certain tension. On the one hand, Jesus’ resurrection body can be touched and handled (v. 27; Lk. 24:39), bears the marks of the wounds inflicted on Jesus’ pre-death body (Jn. 20:20, 25, 27), and not only cooks fish (21:9) but eats it (Lk. 24:41–43). On the other hand, Jesus’ resurrection body apparently rose through the grave-clothes (Jn. 20:6–8), appears in a locked room (vv. 19, 26), and is sometimes not (at least initially) recognized. The closest we are likely to come to an explanation is 1 Cor. 15:35ff.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Downers Grove: Eerdmans, 1991), 641. Cf. Bruce, 388; Milne, 291; Klink, 844.

²⁵ Timothy J. Keller, “Mary!” (March 23, 2008), *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ John Calvin was right: “in Mary we have an image of our calling. For the only entrance to the true knowledge of Christ is when He first knows us and then intimately invites us to Himself.”

²⁸ “This may be John’s way of emphasizing the importance of hearing and believing (rather than seeing and believing, as with the disciples)” since the section concludes in verse 29 with Jesus saying, “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” Moody, 136.

²⁹ Anyabwile, 73.

³⁰ Ibid., 74.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Gilbert, 132-133.

³³ Ibid., 133.