

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

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Sunday 3 April 2016

JOHN 20: 11-18

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ **At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.**

¹⁵ **He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"**

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ **Jesus said to her, "Mary."**

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: **"I have seen the Lord!"** And she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 14: 6-24

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know^[b] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be^[c] in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are

in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and **I too will love them and show myself to them.**"

²² Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

went to the hairdresser on the Thursday before Easter.

I'm beginning to feel as though I take my life or my hair in my hands when I go there these days.

The new lady asked me if I had any plans for Easter. And I said: actually I'm working on Friday and Sunday. She said what? You're working?

And I hastened to explain. Oh yeah, I'm a minister- the pastor of a church. We are probably one of the few who do work on Easter Friday.

Well I started to watch my hair coming off in clumps as she started to process what this means.

She said what is Easter Friday about? I don't understand why we celebrate this; what is it about?

I said it's about the death of Jesus - so Jesus was crucified on Friday and on Sunday he rose again on the dead.

And she said but what has it got to do with Easter eggs and bunnies?

I said nothing actually, the same as Christmas got nothing to do with Santa Claus.

Oh yeah she agreed, it's just a commercial world making money isn't it? It's just all about making money. I agreed and then said:

I think you must know about the story of Jesus birth and death. And she said yes I do, I just don't understand and I don't know the real meaning of it. I grew up in a an atheist home and we never went to church.

I said: are you an atheist?

She said no! I believe I have to believe in something outside of myself. I'm more spiritual than anything else.

I said: have you thought about going to church? and she said I just, I just don't know, I just I feel really scared of being told that I need God, that God loves me, you know all that stuff.

I said you want something real don't you? And she said yes. You don't want religion you want something like a real relationship and I explained that Jesus is the face of God and that he came in order that we might be able to get to know what God is like- God's character.

Now I have really thick hair and I go to the hairdresser to get it thinned and all this time that we are an intense conversation, I am aware that my hair is getting thinner and thinner and I'm getting afraid that I will end up with bald patches.

So then I said: **I see Jesus.** There's this stunned pause.

You see Jesus?

Yes, in my 'mind's eye' or my imagination I see him and he talks to me.

She seemed to be relieved by that and said I get that, I get that it's a spiritual thing, I can understand that concept of the mind's eye and imagination.

I said yes I ask him to show himself to me in a way that I can understand. And he does.

She smiles with some sense of recognition.

But I said you have to get the right spirituality can't just have any sort of spirituality. It needs to be Jesus.

And if you ask Him to show himself to you He will.

She seemed to digest that really well and the conversation continued on abit. I said : And do you know that Jesus is showing himself to Muslims. They see visions of a man dressed in white in their dreams and just spontaneously Jesus is revealing who He is and they are turning to Him.

I gave her quite a bit of food for thought. And I greatly wished I had a copy of one of the gospels to give her and that I could have prayed with her then and there to ask Jesus to reveal Himself to her. I think I'm gonna get more organised.

I'm telling you this story for a few reasons:

1. I hope that you are as dismayed as I am at the fact that that woman represents people in our land, our Christian nation, who do not know who Jesus is. It's getting worse if my visit's to the hairdresser are anything to go by.

When I became a Christian back in the day, I count myself to be extremely privileged; I was about 14, and it was because of several critical factors:

No 1 being my church, flawed though it was...it gave a faithful proclamation of life with God, a great youth group and an opportunity to confirm my faith at 14.

No 2 what really set me alight was a Scripture Union camp on Ponui Island at the end of that 5th form. Two things stood out. The first was another leader. Her name was Angela and she is Fran's cousin. She demonstrated a care and a love to me that I was not used to and I was drawn to what sustained that. The second was an overnight hike, where we sat around a campfire and sang songs. We sang: In the stars his handiwork I see...and I looked up at the sky and I knew that God was real, it burned into my soul and I knew He was there and that kindled a desire to commit my life to serving him and being a part of this sort of community. From that point on I wasn't the same. I came alive.

Church, a word I love and hate. But what a critical role it plays in young people's lives. Here we hold the space for the whanau to grow up in the knowledge of Jesus, for the Gospel light to continue to hold bright. A strong, stable and community building children's work and youth group is to be guarded with your life. Church is still the Body of Christ, it is where God expresses Himself, in and through us. You may be tempted to move on, to exist outside of the institution, you may have been mistreated and feel what's the point; but I say to you...we need church more than ever and this society needs us to be church more than ever. Real church. A church that fights to keep the light burning in every small corner.

And in that church we need to find real Community. *Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.* True community begins in the **home** of the Trinity; the community of Father, Son and Spirit. It begins in knowing them and knowing each other in them. True community is a great prize. For men and women will be drawn to authentic love and real community. How will they know, they will know we are Christians by our love. This isn't an option, it's a responsibility everyone of us holds as members of Christ and belonging to His household. This is the

way we are taught to live....through forgiveness and laying down our lives for one another. Little things, big things that testify to a remarkable way of life, not experienced anywhere but the church of Jesus Christ. And fight for this too, because its fragmented, diverse, constantly changing but its what God has given you.

Scripture Union camps are the best! They create a temporary community where leaders care and share their faith and hope. Built around adventure, they combine an awesome programme with a very Christ centred and relational opportunity to get to know Jesus. As you do life together and see Christ's character lived out and modeled it makes an impact. A huge impact!

They need leaders. This summer I hope they will be able to hold 2 camps, junior and senior, on our land in Wanaka and one day...I would love to be able to build a large barn type conference centre there to facilitate this type of mission more permanently. This land is due to an inheritance I received but I really hope that I can leave a spiritual legacy.

To students, give yourself to mission whether at home or overseas...in your breaks take every opportunity to serve those younger than you or those less fortunate than you. You will be the winner. I am eternally grateful for that one leader and you can be the same light. What about you, would you consider being a leader this summer? We could do with many more camps here in the south.

Church and Community: 2 really important C's in the Christian life and in the life of our society. We must hold the light in our nation and that has all sorts of implications for how we do life together.

2. I tell this story because I believe there is a very simple way of sharing good news with our society, if we will have the courage.

As a young Christian, I really struggled with sharing my faith and I felt I ought to. I particularly felt guilty every time I went to the hairdresser because I never said anything. What I struggled with was the really bad theology that said if you don't believe in God/Jesus you are going to hell. So to try and witness to someone to believe in God/Jesus for that reason is not good news and everyone knows it. I strongly recommend that if you believe this, you need to revise that and the manner in which you share the gospel. It is the love of God in Jesus that we witness to.

Jesus is another matter altogether. He is good news! He is the best news we could ever give someone. So for me to say to this woman cutting my hair that *I see Jesus* marks an important development in my understanding and commitment. It marks a decision to have courage and witness to the presence of Jesus and His longing for everyone to belong and a belief that if I ask He will come and make Himself known. 100% I believe this!! If you want me to help you find real relationship and intimacy with Jesus I'm your woman. I witness first hand Jesus becoming real to people all the time. I have confidence that when I ask and help facilitate that he will make Himself known. Sometimes it takes a bit of coaching, but eventually and in different ways Jesus makes himself known.

I do this via a very simple approach that we call Immanuel process. This could also be called 'practising the presence of Jesus' as described by Brother Lawrence in 1666. It's not something new, it's just that we have forgotten how to do it or not been taught or just got lost in the time warp of our own importance and busyness. So in a nutshell let me try to explain.

[] Brother Lawrence said in *Practicing the Presence of God* 'that in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to him; we must first apply to him with some diligence, but after a little care we will find His love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.'

[] that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God's presence, by continually conversing with him. That we should feed and nourish our soul with high notions of God which would yield us great joy in being devoted to him. And if this was my design to sincerely serve God I might come to him as often as I pleased, without any fear of being troublesome.

[] That we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to him frankly and plainly, and imploring his assistance in our fears, just as they happen. That God never failed to grant it, as often as he

had experienced.

[] That all bodily notifications and other exercises are useless because the shortest way to go straight to Him is by a continual exercise of love, and doing all them for his sake.

Immanuel. God with us.

Do you believe in a God who comes near to you? Do you believe in a God who speaks to you?

Do we believe that you can interact and converse with Him as though he is in the room, sitting next to you? Do you believe that you can even see Him?

If so, you will not find my testimony strange or even offensive. Really it is that simple. God comes near me in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the total manifestation of God in bodily form. He is with us, and in us through the Spirit and we may sense and imagine His presence and person with us all the time. As he says: I will never leave or forsake you.

Some people will see Him in 3D. Others will have more of a 'sense' and will 'see in the spirit' or in the 'minds eye' or imagination that he is here or there and what he looks like, what he is wearing and what he is saying. The Word of God testifies to this capability within us. To 'know' Jesus is way beyond the level of intellect, belief and knowledge. According to Eph 1: 17, it is *epignosis*- to experience and encounter him with all the senses of which sight is one. This testimony is reiterated in the lives of our bible heroes. Moses saw Jesus 'face to face'. John 5:46 if you believed Moses, you would believe me, **for he wrote about me.** 39 you study the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me and have life.

King David said quoted in Acts 2:25: *I always set you before my eyes or I saw the Lord always before my eyes; he is at my right hand and I will not be shaken.*

Stephen saw the Son of God standing at the right hand of the father at the Gates of Heaven. John had an amazing vision or revelation of Jesus. These men had a very personal relationship with Jesus. You may say well that is all exceptional, it doesn't happen now. Really? Muslims see Jesus, they don't know who he is but they see a man dressed in white who comes to them.

My story of the dentist in Chiangmai.

It's a matter of practice. A matter of believing that actually, Jesus is here and now. And he wants to interact and relate on a personal level more than you do. And it means taking the time to do so with persistence and practice.

Last year when I was travelling I tried to find Jesus wherever I went. So many times I saw him in my mind's eye and he was wearing something different. Each time I learned something of his heart for peoples of all nations and cultures.

Jesus in Hasidic clothes

As I have been practicing his presence, looking to make his presence concrete and observing what he is wearing and saying, I am stunned by what happens, by the closeness and intimacy that is growing between me and Jesus. And the heart of that is love; his affirmation and absolute delight in being with me no matter what. Nothing I do or don't do can either alter or harm that total ravaging love he has for me. From his love comes my standing, I stand in Him; in his affirmation I find my identity, I find my home and belonging, I find my community. From this springs calling and serving not the other way around.

1. Appreciate 2. Ask Him to show you where He is and what He looks like 3. Ask Him what He wants you to know.

Mary who knew intimacy with Jesus was distraught.

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.”¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” My sheep know my voice

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

After the resurrection Jesus appeared to the disciples and the women disciples. But account after account you read they didn’t recognise Him. Mary thought he was the gardener, they thought he was a ghost, or not until the breaking of bread did they know it was Jesus.

I find this fascinating. We can be with Jesus and not know Him, not recognise Him calling, not understand. In church, a Christian, but not really functioning in relationship.

Jesus can appear in any fashion. He’s not limited to our dimension, time or space, or to our little comprehension. He comes to us in a way that can change our understanding. Don’t be limited by a white robe or a movie star image or an old Sunday school painting. Jesus is alive, he’s multidimensional and he’s got things to show us.

When I was 15, at that camp. I was aware of God and His majesty in creation. I was seared to Him. But I didn’t know the person of Jesus and his intimacy. Now I see this memory of sitting around the campfire again. This time I was aware that Jesus was sitting next to me in that circle with His arm around me. As that 15 year old I didn’t know that but now I see Him there and in so many other places where my understanding of God was way more distant and one step removed.

Are you satisfied with a one step removed relationship? Maybe this is your experience. Yes you know God. Yes you believe, but is your connection to Him very strong or intimate?

All I can say is that as I have practised the presence of Jesus, over and over again, the impact that was made all those years ago has now deepened into something very special. Intimacy is won with time, presence and persistence. CHRIST is the most important C. NOW is the time to buy OIL.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Here’s a wee snapshot of Harray life. I met Wayne in Katikati where he was a dairy farmer and though born in Auckland I went there to teach. We had our first two kids and then we decided to leave and go to Invercargill. North to south, we packed most of our stuff into a caravan and van and drove to the bottom of the world. We left a farm and a kiwifruit orchard. We wanted to work in a team with some friends and be more involved in ministry. Wayne worked for a Christian trust growing swedes and then set up the Southland food bank. I got involved in church life and started a theology degree by distance to Otago. I also started a diploma in counselling and for many years did relief teaching at James Hargest. They were busy years and while there I responded to a call to go into ordained ministry.

So we left Invercargill in 2000 and came to Dunedin for me to train at the Knox Centre.

We also joined up with Leith Valley. Then when I had finished, Richard asked me to consider student ministry and from there studentsoul was born. Our married life has been a series of adventures. Quite big

moves, away from family and from a comfortable lifestyle, redefining our focus and obeying the call to full time ministry.

I am telling you this because pioneering and taking risks is not all that strange to us. We want to give everything to God and to trust Him for what we need. It isn't easy to be taking this step...to leap off the cliff so to speak with no jobs ahead of us, but we have a certainty that we will serve with integrity and commitment and joy wherever that now takes us.

I do not leave this position here at Leith easily. There has been immense grief over the past few months as I have come to terms with moving on. 16 years is a long time to plough into a particular context and people. I have tried with all my heartfelt effort to develop our life together and grow great community. I was immensely disappointed not to be able to lead this congregation in the next few years, but

Having sought God's way ahead, I finally resigned when I heard Jesus say this to me: I've called you to be my hands and feet. My arms and legs. I've called you to minister ME. How will they know unless someone tells them. How will they hear unless you go? Romans 10

How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? I am committed to ministering Christ.

What do I think I will do? Here's a little of my vision.

Immediately I finish I am going to Ohio in the US to be with our youngest daughter when she graduates from Mt Vernon Nazarene College. Following this I will fly to the Chicago area where I am part of the Immanuel Leaders gathering and an Advanced course over 5 days or so. I then fly to LA to meet up with Bunty Bunce. When she was here recently, she told me she had randomly met a Syrian woman at a conference in Singapore and prayed for her. This woman was so taken aback with the prayer ministry Bunty offered that she insisted Bunty come and visit if she was in the LA area.

Now this young woman is a Syrian lawyer and she is currently a fellowe of the Whitehouse. She and her mother head up a major Syrian Relief Agency called Roads of Success. This agency is advocating for 16 million Christians and minorities, psecuted Christians in the Middle East, 1000's in crisis and empowering women. When Bunty was telling me about this, I got very excited. I would love to hear about this and help in some way. So it turned out that I could and will, after changing a flight be able to go and meet them, and just be open to listen and see and hear what Jesus is saying.

I think that is where I am at. I am listening for the call to. I have heard the call away, but not the specific context of what's next.

It will involve Immanuel and if possible to be able to set up a network across NZ of churches and individuals who are learning the practice of finding Jesus present and intimate and then able to help others to find Him in the same way. Richard has asked me to lead a seminar at the National Assembly and this will give me a critical area of exposure to share the prayer approach.

Jesus is trying to hold us in his arms, but we are too big!

Like an adult in an adult's arms we are squirming and fighting and uncomfortable, tossing in discomfort. What we need to do is become like a child and relax in His arms and in His strength. To stop being in charge and let Him drive. To stop questioning our right brain and let our imagination have a little more presence. To start hearing again and not second guessing and mistrusting everything that goes on. We are quenching the Spirit and pushing him away. Become like a child in faith again.

- STICK WITH CHURCH for the sake of society
- BUILD TRUE COMMUNITY to reach others
- FIND INTIMACY WITH Jesus this is your inheritance
- SHARE THAT WITH OTHERS simply, walk across the room
- BE FULLY COMMITTED TO CHRIST No holds barred, give Him everything