

Today we are looking at maybe someone you never really thought about in the Easter celebration. This is a character in Scripture that never got over her encounters with Jesus.

I wish we had more like that, so many times we in the Body of Christ live like the phrase that I'm sure you have heard, "How quickly we forget."

How quickly we forget our God encounters, How quickly we forget how much He loves us, How quickly we forget that He died for us, How quickly we forget. . .

Mary Magdalene our character today in this series of Who Do You Say That I Am never got over her encounters with Jesus. She never forgot.

From the moment Jesus rescued her from the seven demons who lived inside of her and tormented her, to those six hours being near Jesus as he suffered and died on the cross, to that Easter Sunday morning when Jesus spoke to her after He rose from the dead, Mary

Magdalene's life was changed forever.

Once a person encounters Jesus, that person's life is never the same again. They may not recognize it, they may not accept it, but it cannot be denied. And with that encounter we are left with the question that Jesus Himself asks us, "Who do you say that I am?"

During this Easter celebration we are looking at the question and trying to answer who Jesus was and is and always will be. Jesus is the one that conquered the grave after he died for the sins of all humanity. Jesus is the one that is worthy of all our worship, praise, and adoration because since we have a resurrection we also have a hope. Jesus is the one that gives our life purpose and meaning and value. For these reasons and more we worship and celebrate Jesus today.

Today as we gather to celebrate Easter and what it means we are going to try and understand more about the woman who had the first encounter with the resurrected Lord: Mary Magdalene. Her story can help us answer the question of

who Jesus is.

Scripture doesn't tell us much of her personal life and background. What we do know of her is that each of the four gospels mentions her by name, but variable details of her life and background are far and few between. The one detail of her that we know for certain is that she was the very first person to see Jesus after His resurrection on the first Easter Sunday.

Mark 16:9 tells us, When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

In Luke's gospel the first time Mary Magdalene is mentioned he records this same encounter that freed her from the torment.

Luke 8:1-3 - After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and

diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

What we find here in this text is Mary Magdalene and some other women who had been impacted by Jesus, not only followed Him but also helped support His ministry with finances and however else they could.

What we don't know is the specific time and place that Jesus freed Mary from her demons. What we do know about her is that she was from the Galilean fishing village of Magdala just a few miles from the village of Capernaum on the north shore of the lake. We also know that this was not the only deliverance that Jesus had preformed in this part of region. It is likely that Mary from Magdala was delivered and restored while Jesus simply crossed her path one day which changed her life forever.

One thing I think is important to mention her before we get

some preconceived idea, is that in every case we read about demon possession in the Scriptures it is depicted not because of a person's sin, but rather as an affliction. That is not to say that it does not occur because of sin, but we just can not assume it is sin. The demon-possessed people were victims who suffered miserable lives due not only to how demons terrorized them, but also how society treated them.

The demon-possessed person was treated like an outcast, these victims rarely had a friend to call there own, nobody knew what to do with them other than just leave them alone. And loneliness was an all too familiar companion to someone like Mary Magdalene. All she was accompanied by were her seven demons that invaded her life until she crossed paths with Jesus, and when that occurred the demons knew his name and called him by name in fear. And when that happened Jesus cast them out, set her free, and changed her life forever.

Maybe she suffered from depression, shame, fear, or a number of ever things, but all that changed the day she

encountered Jesus. When Jesus set her free Mary Magdalene was never the same again. And she began to follow Jesus.

What is important to know is that in the days of Jesus, most rabbis did not allow a woman to follow as a disciple. However, Jesus is not your typical rabbi. Jesus did more for valuing and showing dignity to women than anybody in the history of the world.

As Mary Magdalene followed Jesus, she undoubtedly heard Him teach, saw the miracles He performed, observed how He loved people, and eventually found herself near the cross when Jesus was crucified. Out of the twelve disciples that Jesus had called early on in his ministry only John was found at the cross all the others had fled the scene and left Jesus alone. Mary however, stayed near Him who had rescued her along with John. I tell you why I believe the other disciples weren't there in a little bit. But what one thing we need to understand is that she was. She never left. Her encounters with the Lord meant too much.

Mary Magdalene waited with Jesus. She watched Him and cried for Him at Calvary, and Jesus hung for six hours that Friday of Passover outside the gates of Jerusalem. Her devotion for Him did not wane even after Jesus took His last breath, was taken down from the cross, and brought to a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as the sun was seething to mark the beginning of the Passover. Mary Magdalene was watching as they took the body down, she watched as they wrapped it quickly before the sun fully set and the Sabbath Rest began. Mary Magdalene because of her devotion and love for Jesus would soon be back at this same place when the Sabbath came and went. Her reason she wanted to pay her respects and anoint His dead body in a final act of devotion to the Lord.

Let's look at Matthew 28 which describes the scene and the surprise awaiting her as Mary Magdalene and another Mary who was the mother of James and Salome, made their way to the tomb where she last saw the body of Jesus.

Matthew 28:1-10 - After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."



I can imagine this was quite the weekend for Mary. She was likely traumatized by what she witnessed at the cross on Friday. Who wouldn't be. Saturday must have been exhausting with crying and flashbacks over all she encountered in her interactions with Jesus since she first came upon Him in Galilee. Now here it is Sunday, and her loyalty and devotion lead her one last time back to the tomb where she last saw them place the body of Jesus inside. If you think about it because Mary was one that watched where they took the body of Jesus Mary was one that could tell the disciples that where they were not around during the ordeal where the body of Jesus was at, or in our story better said where the body was not. For when she went to the tomb on Sunday morning, she did not go expecting it to be empty.

Let me pause here for a moment. I'm sure that she heard Jesus say in three days. But for some reason Mary Magdalene as well as some of the disciples never really understood that. The Scripture tells us. . .

She went to give Him a proper burial. She saw Him die and wrapped up just three days earlier. She had prepared spices and oils and was planning to show one last demonstration of her love and devotion for this Jesus who had become her rescuer.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb out of a deep affection for Jesus. She certainly did not expect to encounter what she did. She expected to see nothing more than a dead friend who was still wrapped from head to toe in the same burial sheets in the same place where she saw Him Friday at sundown. The burial preparations and body anointing would be an act of devotion that helped communicate who Mary Magdalene thought Jesus was. He was the one that saved her from her demons. He was the one that gave her back her life. He was the one that showed her dignity and value. He was the one that demonstrated what life could be for her. But now this One that did that was dead. The least she could do for all He did was to honor Him the way that she had planned.

Perhaps you are here today not expecting much more than to sing a few songs and hear a story to try and help us remember what happened so long ago. Maybe you are here this Easter because you were asked by your family and just thought it isn't worth the fight to argue about it. Whatever your reason or motive, one thing you need to understand is that something powerful could happen in your life when you least expect it. Your experience today might find yourself much like that of Mary's, she was going to a tomb not expecting much more than to perform a ritual of devotion after the death this One that she had encountered not long before all this took place.

She figured she had time to do this, see the Jews mistakenly believed that the spirit of a person remained in the body for three days until finally departing for the afterlife on the fourth day. Jesus had been dead for three. In tombs like where Jesus was laid there was often a small hole carved into the side called a nephesh with the understanding that it would enable the spirit of a person to depart from the body after the third day had come and gone. One of the traditional sites in Jerusalem known as

the Garden Tomb shows a nephesh carved in the side to demonstrate this belief. Mary Magdalene thought she still had time to anoint Jesus before His body would decay and decompose to the point the His spirit would no longer recognize Him and cause His spirit to flee, at least that is what the Jewish culture of that day taught.

What Mary Magdalene found when she reached the tomb stopped her in her tracks and caused her jaw to drop. This stone that was placed and sealed was no longer closing the mouth of the tomb but had been rolled away by an angel of the Lord who was now sitting on top of it as if to say look at this triumphant exit. He made one into Jerusalem now He has made one out of the tomb.

Many Biblical scholars make mention that the stone was not rolled away so that Jesus could get out, but rather it was moved so that Mary Magdalene and the rest could see that Jesus had already risen. And why not we have Scripture that tells us Jesus walked through a wall of a home, so I think He could certainly walk through a stone that blocked the entrance to a tomb.

John 20:19-20 - On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

I don't know what was going through Mary's mind when she came upon that now empty tomb. I can almost imagine emotions from sorrow and grief to wonder and a little disbelief as she saw the angel who greeted her from that empty burial place. While John's account of this story allows us to consider the emotional roller coaster washing over Mary Magdalene to the point that she initially mistook the resurrected Jesus as a common gardener, all the others suggest that once she heard his voice, she knew she was in the presence of her rescuer once again. After all Scripture tells us my sheep hear my voice.

Let us watch as she tells her story: [play video](#)

It all must have happened so quickly that the scene seemed a blur. Look at how Mathew records these moments in verses 8-9.

Matthew 28:8-9 - So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.

The way that Jesus greeted Mary Magdalene was with a word of greeting that in the Greek language was so unassuming and almost playful in a quiet manner. The word is chairete which was a casual and ordinary way to greet someone. It was if Jesus said, Howdy and good morning ladies. You never know who you'll run into outside an empty tomb (Wink wink)." In their haste to run and tell the disciples what they had just saw per the angels instructions, the reality of the resurrected Jesus standing and speaking before them stopped them in their tracks and caused them to worship Him according to verse 9.

The word "worshipped" is the word prosekynesan and can be translated "knelt before." Kneeling before the one we worship certainly is viewed as a demonstration of posture of worship and adoration. The resurrection of Jesus causes people to stop and kneel before Him. When it comes to that kind of worship, kneeling can only be done when a person stops. Stops running from God, stops being distracted, stops . . .you decide. One thing is certain in order to kneel we need to stop.

Nothing can be more appropriate in our fast-paced lives than to stop. Kneel. Worship. The resurrected Jesus is worthy of altering the pace of our lives and giving full attention without anything else taking place. Efficiency and hurry take a back seat to bowing and stopping to worship on this day and may I say everyday.

John MacArther says, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central event of God's redemptive history. The resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, and everything that we are and have and hope to be is predicated on its reality. There would be no Christianity if

there were no resurrection."

That reality is worth slowing down, pondering, bowing before, kneeling and worshipping will all of who we are. It was the natural expression and posture of Mary Magdalene. And as she stopped and worshipped by kneeling in awe, Jesus made an amazing statement to her that we must not miss during this incredible encounter.

Matthew 28:10 - Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Jesus tells Mary Magdalene, the one who was rescued from seven demons is to now be the person responsible for being the bearer of the good news as Jesus tells her, "go and tell my brothers." Jesus looked at His disciples as more than just that, they were family, brothers in the faith. And the truth is. . .

Hebrews 2:10-11 - In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom



everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

Jesus calls us just like the original disciples His brothers and sisters. Now church that is good news.

What a moment of forgiveness and hope for the disciples who had abandoned Jesus during his most trying time. In fact the way that some denied Him just hours earlier was nothing short of sin. Peter cursed the name of Jesus and lied about even knowing Him at all. And that is what caused Peter and perhaps the others as well to run away, hiding and weeping, at the guilt for leaving Jesus to be on the cross without them by His side.

Yet, after all of that Jesus doesn't label them as losers, screw-ups, deserters, not weak follows, or lousy disciples. . .but rather "my brothers."

As a matter of fact I love how Marks gospel tells us the story.

Mark 16:7 - But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'

When it comes to Jesus, rescued victims get invited to tell good news, they get to go get their brothers. Why was Mary so emotional she knew who He was, and she knew who she was. She was family.

He was the One that rescued her. He was the One who had saved her. He was the One who had died for her. And He was the One who had risen to meet her. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. And now He has risen. Because of that reality we are once again are given the opportunity to ask the all important question that he asked to His disciples, His brothers, "Who do you say I am?"

May our answer include a bowed knee and a life that declares, He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, the rescuer, the healer, my all in all, the Son of God, and Savior, the Messiah and King."

That is who I say Jesus is.

(Get ready for communion)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

In a moment we are going to get ready to take communion, but the Scripture goes on to say, :let us examine

ourselves."

So this is a great opportunity to kneel before the Savior and do just that.

However, I also believe that those that need a healing today can receive that as we receive this His body and blood.

It is by the blood of Jesus that we are healed. So if you need a healing this is your finest hour.

Prayer.

Thank Jesus and then ask Holy Spirit to show up.