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Series: Encounters  
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Easter, Resurrection  
John 20: 11-18

There is something special that happened with the disciples of Jesus after the resurrection. One minute they are afraid and hiding and disappointed. They had seen Jesus and all he had done and said but for some reason, up until the point of his death, that was not enough or at least they did not catch what it meant.

But first forward a month later as we will see, they are fiery, confident in Jesus. They are preaching the Good news of the Kingdom of God even to a point of risking their own lives. And sure enough, they died for this cause. Why would people who received a message transform from fearful and disillusioned about the same message to boldly speaking about it in power and even ready to die for it?

Here is another story. I am really going further into the story for those who have never read the bible or it has been a while. There is a guy called Paul and he hated the Jesus movement. And in his mind, he was doing it also for God. But afterwards, we find the same guy so passionate about the message of Jesus and the Jesus movement that he was one of the leaders. He planted churches and taught and wrote letters that actually end up making a huge chunk of what we call the New Testament?

What could have happened? Two things and these two things are going to be our focus for a few weeks. The two things are 1) encounters with the risen Christ and 2) pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection and pouring of the Holy Spirit became the lens through which they interpreted their encounters with him before and marked their lives moving forward.

They would say, “Hey, we are eyewitnesses to these things. We saw them kill him. We ran and hid but then he came back to us. He rose from the dead. We touched him again. I think he was the real deal. I think. He was everything he said he was.”

And it is not just for another series sake, I really believe that even now people are encountering Jesus. I really pray that in this journey you will also encounter the risen Jesus. And wherever we may as a nation and a world that the Holy Spirit will be poured out a new on all of us.

Let's pray

Join me in reading the story of Jesus as told by one of his friends called John. So we will be getting into the middle of the story so let me catch you up. It is Sunday morning, Jesus has been crucified, died and buried. Now some burial rituals could not be done because Saturday was set aside as a day of rest as worship. So some of Jesus' disciples were out on Sunday morning to perform some of these finally but they found the tomb open and the body missing. Obviously, this is very upsetting, to put it mildly.

*Mary, however, stood outside the tomb sobbing, crying, and kneeling at its entrance. As she cried, two heavenly messengers appeared before her sitting where Jesus' head and feet had been laid.*

*Angel: Dear woman, why are you weeping?*

*Mary Magdalene: They have taken away my Lord, and I cannot find Him.*

*After uttering these words, she turned around to see Jesus standing before her, but she did not recognize Him.*

*Jesus: Dear woman, why are you sobbing? Who is it you are looking for?*

*She still had no idea who it was before her. Thinking He was the gardener, she muttered:*

*Mary Magdalene: Sir, if you are the one who carried Him away, then tell me where He is and I will retrieve Him.*

*Jesus: Mary!*

*Mary Magdalene (turning to Jesus and speaking in Hebrew): Rabboni, my Teacher!*

*Jesus: Mary, you cannot hold Me. I must rise above this world to be with My Father, who is also your Father; My God, who is also your God. Go tell this to all My brothers.*

*Mary Magdalene obeyed and went directly to His disciples.*

**John 20:11-18**

You see, one of the reasons I love the Bible is that it is not telling a neat story, at least that is not the attempt. It's just telling the story for people who are caught up in the wonder of God. Because you would not tell this story to live this.

Here is Jesus risen from the dead and guess what, Mary thinks he is the gardener. We the church have spent history painting the risen Jesus with a glow. And I get that some of that is an artistic expression of a theological stand, but Mary is not seeing someone with a glow.

Instead, Mary is seeing someone who she assumes is the gardener. It seems to me that the dirt of the grave does not diminish the glory of resurrection because death has been defeated. The grave cannot hold life.

In contrast to the announcement of. The birth of Jesus, with angels singing in the heavens and bright star in the sky, there is a silence and such humility in an even more glorious Christ. And you would think that this is where the noise is needed. The whole world needs to know you, and it will. But Jesus is resurrected not only with scars from his crucifixion but with maybe even with dirt from his tomb enough to be confused for the gardener.

You do not tell stories like that if that is the most important part of the story of God. That is why I love the Bible, it is honest as eyewitnesses just tell the stories as the Holy Spirit helps them.

And Jesus resurrected shows up first to women. In those days, they were not regarded as reliable witnesses just because they were women. Why on earth, would anyone tell the story and have them as the first witnesses if you are trying so hard to make this a believable story. Unless you are just telling a story in honesty.

So Mary is here and she is hurting and grieving. I know times when I have been hurt and choking with tears. You throw all caution in the wind and you stomp.

Mary goes, "Show me where you've hidden him.. Show me where you have carried him and I will go retrieve him".

Which is weird if Mary could actually carry a dead body by herself. I have watched enough TV shows to know that.

Then Jesus calls her name. And the way she called her, her eyes were immediately opened and she knew it was the Lord. But Jesus is not rebuking her for not believing. Jesus is not upset about not being recognised.

"Hey c'mon been gone 3 days and you don't know me no more"

No Jesus is filled with compassion for his grieving friend. So he calls her name gently, "Mary". Calls her in a familiar way that would help her recognize her

Filled with awe she calls him teacher. And I can imagine tries to go hold him after she regains her dexterity.

And Jesus says, "No don't hold me yet, go tell my brothers"

Jesus first mission after the resurrection is bringing comfort to his friends whose hearts had been broken and hopes crushed by the death of their master, Lord and friend

"Go tell my brothers, go tell the others." Go share this joy with them."

And I see a picture of the prophecy in the vision John had and is recorded in what we call the book of revelation. "He will wipe away tears from their eyes". I see why Paul calls God the God of all comfort.

It seems a priority to the King to comfort his people. His people have been longing for him and some even giving up on him as they lost hope. Those who have cried out to God when he seemed silent, saying, Say something I'm giving up on you. It seems the King makes it a priority to comfort them when the Kingdom breaks through.

Yet here is an interesting thing we all know, it is hard to comfort people if you have not been in the same place they have been. You could try. People who have been through an experience themselves have a unique way of bringing comfort to those going through it and even better when partnering with the Holy Spirit.

Here is Jesus, doubling down on the Humility of the Kingdom of God. If you think being born in a barn is humble, how about coming back from the dead and being crowned King but looking like a simple gardener? Having the dirt of the ground and scars of the cross?

Mary is looking at her teacher and friend and master and she knows without a doubt, that he understands exactly what she has had to go through.

Mary is looking at his friend and she knows that her pain, her agony all the deaths she has died inside and without her knowledge even the deaths the disciples will face, Jesus understands and so He brings comfort. Calling her gently reminds her that they have one father and says, better go tell the rest.

Maybe inspiration for Peter?

I think this could be one of the reasons Peter is inspired to later write these words

***“Throw your cares and burdens on Jesus because He cares”***

God is not too far from you today. He can bring comfort because He is going through all of this with us.

You can throw your wounds from years of unbelief on Him because He cares

We can throw our fears for the future on Him because He cares for us

You can throw your need for forgiveness on Him because He cares for you, no matter what.

We can throw our desperation to see Him move in our families, and our land on Him because he cares for us.

You see even now, God is still speaking. Even now Jesus is still making encounters and bringing comfort. And in a sense, the world needs to hear the message of God's comfort. Some of you have already been immediate hit and need comfort. Some are kinda okay, but you know those who need God to comfort them.

Here is my invitation, Throw your cares to Jesus with abandon, because he actually cares, let us invite God's comfort over those needing it right now. Mary actually goes to the rest of the disciples and says, "I have seen the Lord!"

And I think Jesus will be showing up in some of your lives in undeniable ways. In ways where you are sure, this was dead but now it is alive. It will be miraculous provision. It will be physical healing. It will be comfort. As God breaks your mourning and turns it into joy, he is saying one more thing

"Don't hold on to me yet. Go tell your brothers and sister. Go tell those who have not seen me yet say to the, "I have seen the Lord!"

Let's pray