

“W.O.W. – What An Unlikely Witness”

John 20:11-18

October 26, 2014

INTRO: When was the last time you were truly BLOWN AWAY?

VIDEO: Gospel of John 20:1-18

PREVIEW:

W. = ***What: the Resurrection*** (proof of the Gospel)

O. = ***Offensive Truths:*** (seeing & hearing are not enough)

W. = ***Want-to: Responding with Obedience*** (Go and tell...)

TIMELESS TRUTH: The tomb proves the cross!

(and the cross proves the Christ)

I. W. = What: the Resurrection

1*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.*

“first day of the week” = Easter Sunday (Sunday worship)

“Mary Magdalene” = demon exercised, came to Golgotha

“came to tomb early” = reveals heart, passion, priority

“while it was still dark” = ditto

“saw that the stone had been taken away...” = evidence

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.”*

Mary’s running reveals her concern for Christ’s honor...

Mary’s running “to” Peter & John reveals their leadership...

“They have taken the Lord...” reveals Mary’s myopia...

“and we do not know where...” reveals Mary’s bad memory

NOTE: Confusion plagues this “good heart”

3So 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. **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. **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.

Peter & John also run... revealing their concern & curiosity

Notice: John arrives first but waits for Peter to go in... Why?

Notice: Peter arrives & goes right in... Why? (personality?)

Both disciples see grave-clothes & acknowledge He’s gone

NOTE: Grave-clothes refute “stolen body” story...

Grave-clothes “folded” reveals supernatural

NOTE: v.8 “believed” = “they have taken Him...” v.9 tells us that they did not yet understand that they were witnessing the evidence of fulfilled Scripture.

NOTE: **v.9 “He MUST rise from the dead” reveals the thrust and theological import of Christ’s resurrection... This is not unexpected “good news,” on the contrary, the empty tomb and resurrection of the crucified Christ is the EXACT, cross-choreographed plan that God set in motion before time began!**

Friends, the empty tomb is the crescendo of Christ’s crucifixion and the eternal evidence of our blessed assurance – Amen!

O. = Offensive Truths:

10 *Then the disciples went back to their homes.*

NOTE: the disciples were scared, dazed & confused

Notice: by contrast... Mary stays engaged in concern

Question: Might the contrast explain God's choices?

QUOTE: (John Piper)

If Christ Is Raised, This Life Is a Prelude to Eternal Life and Joy

But if Christ is raised, and if trusting him means that I will be raised with him, then this life is just a brief prelude to eternal life with Christ and ever-increasing joy with him. And if that is true, then Paul is no fool. His life of radical, risk-taking, sacrificial love is not to be pitied. Pity not them that rise with Christ.

Let me give you one small illustration of how this works from the teachings of Jesus in **Luke 14:13-14**. Jesus says, "When you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Do you see the effect of believing in the resurrection – really believing, not just saying you believe it? Without the resurrection we tend to want our pleasures here and now, and so we avoid risk and danger and difficulty and pain and discomfort and frustration; and so our love is tame and bland and weak and cautious and timid.

But, Jesus says, if you believe that your joy in the resurrection will make up for a thousand losses and self-denials and sacrifices and dangers and risks here for the sake of love, then you will love people without a view to what you can get out of it here. It will be sustained by the joy set before you (see [Hebrews 12:2](#)).

- John Piper (2001)

Paul on the Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb*

NOTE: Mary, though confused, remained engaged

Notice Mary's consistent disposition...

Mary remains passionately consumed...

Mary remains purposely engaged...

Mary remains "all about Jesus!"

Mary forces us to ask ourselves:

- How concerned am I about Christ?
- Is His honor a top priority for me? How so?
- Am I consumed by His saving grace?
- Do I get up before dawn to be with Him?
- Do I weep Mary's tears?
- Do I look for Jesus?

*. **12**And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had laid, 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."*

NOTE: John is making a specific point here... His deliberate choice to underscore the "why are you weeping" clause (2X) reveals his emphasis...

John continues to stress the matters of the heart and the confusion that pervades the situation... Setting up the ultimate point:

The risen Christ is who/all you need!

cf: Luke 24:5b-12

“Why do you seek the living One among the dead?”

6“He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, **7**saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” **8**And they remembered His words, **9**and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10**Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. **11****But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.** **12**But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

14Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Question: Have you ever seen Jesus but missed Him?

Question: How is it that Mary did not recognize Him?

Question: Is this a physical, spiritual or dual miscue?

15Jesus 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.”

NOTE: This verse is HUGE with implications...

Notice... now Jesus speaks to Mary (still unrecognized)

Notice... Jesus asks the same question the angels ask

Notice... Jesus takes the question one step further:

“Whom are you seeking?”

This is the eternal question for us all!

Remember: ***“What do you want?”***

Notice... “supposing Him to be the gardener” (How?)

Again: physical or spiritual miscue?

Question: Have you ever talked to God as if
He were merely your gardener?

Question: How does that happen?

Notice... Mary’s heart is confused but Christ-centered!

Mary wants to recover & honor Christ’s body

Notice... Mary is willing to literally do the heavy lifting...

16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus called Mary by name...

Jesus is always personal!

NOTE: People can see & hear God & not respond...

Saving Grace comes only in personal packaging

cf. John 6:44

***"No one can come to Me
unless the Father who sent Me draws him;
and I will raise him up on the last day.***

NOTE: Countless people are drawn to emotional and moralistic, religious crowds... But Christ calls & creates His Church one Christian heart at a time.

Question: Have you heard Him calling YOU?

Question: Has the Father “drawn” you?

Question: Who/what draws you most days?

NOTE: Mary’s change was based on a personal call!

The Bible says,

*"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord,
and believe in your heart that God raised Him
from the dead, you will be saved"
(Romans 10:9).*

Saved from a life of self-absorbed, self-indulgence.

W. = Want-to: Responding with Obedience

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but **go to my brothers** and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Clarification: Jesus is not rebuking Mary, rather He is clarifying that He is not yet done... He does not want her to get the wrong idea (many expected Him to be their conquering hero).

NOTE: Jesus has been referring to "the hour" throughout John's gospel... We know that "the hour" was to begin on the cross. We see here that while "the hour" also included the

resurrection, it did not end their. Jesus is letting the disciples (and us) know that “the hour” will conclude at His ascension (Acts 1:9).

Notice... Mary is instructed by Jesus to GO!

Notice... Mary’s account mirrors the Samaritan woman

- Jesus asks: “What/whom do you want?”
- Jesus first reveals Himself to the unlikely
- He clarifies His Christology to the confused
- He sends them back to the others...
- He will not allow for them to hoard Him
- Notice – both women obey without delay
- Notice – both women are blessed examples

18 *Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.*

NOTE: Mary obeyed!

Notice... Mary told them what the Lord told her to say

Notice... Like the woman at the well... Mary offers proof

Notice... The Lord always sends His rescued, to rescue!

If He is Risen, then we are to follow!

(see Paul's example)

[I am] often in danger of death. Five times I received . . . thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked . . . in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen . . . dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

(2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

Romans 8:11:

"If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Let's PRAY!

Extended notes:

Broad Themes within the Passage:

1. The Resurrection (proof of the promise)
2. Exposure is not enough... (transformed relations)
3. Unlikely vessels... (responses vs. resumes)

What is a Verb Mood?

The terms "indicative" and "imperative" refer to two different verb moods commonly used by the New Testament authors in their teaching on sanctification.

The mood of a verb designates the relationship of the verb's action relative to reality. The following is a simple list of moods of verbs in the New Testament and what they generally signify:

1. indicative - mood of certainty, actuality
2. subjunctive - mood of probability
3. optative - mood of possibility
4. imperative - mood of command

As the list indicates, the New Testament uses indicative statements when discussing what God has done, is doing or will do. Imperative statements are used when saying what we

should do. It is important to realize, not only that both moods are present in the Bible, but that **there is a specific relationship between these two moods in the area of sanctification**. Namely, what God commands us to do (the imperative) is based upon what he has done, is doing or will do (the indicatives). God is signifying by this consistent pattern that sanctification depends on God, but involves human volition and cooperation.

CHAPTER 20 IS perhaps one of the least understood but theologically important chapters in the Fourth Gospel. Its most obvious value is in the record it provides for the resurrection of Jesus.

But unlike the Synoptics John takes us far deeper into the details of what transpired on Easter morning. Matthew and Mark provide minimal information about the resurrection appearances. Matthew reports a meeting of Jesus with Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" at the tomb ([Matt. 28:2](#)) and then tells us how Jesus met the disciples later ([28:9](#)), who "clasped his feet and worshiped him." Mark says that the circle of women included Mary Magdalene as well as Mary the mother of James and Salome ([Mark 16:1](#)), but his shorter ending (to [16:8](#)) gives no resurrection appearance Luke refers as well to the visit of the women and adds to Mark's list that Joanna was there too ([Luke 24:10](#)). But for Luke, the chief story that conveys the importance of this day comes in [24:13-35](#), when Jesus appears along the Emmaus road to two disciples.

John's Gospel takes us in new directions. Three sections divide the chapter. (1) John begins by richly supplementing the Synoptic story, telling us about a personal reunion between Jesus and Mary Magdalene ([20:1-18](#)). While this story could fit easily into the minimalist tomb stories in the Synoptics, for John it is an important vehicle for telling us

things about Jesus and what it means for Christians to have a transformed relationship with the resurrected Lord. Embedded in this account is the most explicit "empty tomb" description in the New Testament. Peter and the Beloved Disciple race to the tomb and become eyewitnesses, pointing to the evidence for Jesus' resurrection.

(2) Jesus appears on Easter Sunday to the circle of apostles in seclusion in Jerusalem ([20:19-23](#)). This adds to the strength of the apostolic eyewitness by supplying a record not only of an empty tomb but also giving a personal eyewitness of Jesus alive from the grave. But once again, this is not John's only interest in the story. Jesus' presence conveys something more, a lesson and a description of what it means to experience this Jesus and to become one of his disciples filled with his Spirit. In a passage that has seen lengthy debate among interpreters, Jesus breathes on his disciples, filling them with his Spirit.

(3) The story takes an unexpected turn when we learn that Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples who has appeared twice before in the Gospel ([11:16](#); [14:5](#)), is absent on Easter Sunday. One week later Jesus reappears, providing Thomas with the evidence enjoyed by the others. Again, this episode underscores the significance of solid apostolic eyewitness testimony (now Thomas may join his colleagues). But as in the two previous sections this one goes a step further. Jesus points beyond such evidence and tells Thomas and those who follow him (the church) about the value of such evidence and the privilege of possessing it. This final section is followed by summary verses that may have originally ended the Gospel ([20:30-31](#)).

John has designed chapter 20 in order to instruct us as readers about two chief themes: the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection and the nature of what it means to be his disciple in the era of his resurrection. (1) Since the Gospel's earliest chapters we have observed how John compiles evidence for the "trial" of Jesus. As readers we have been jurors, weighing the evidence and making judgments. Now John provides us with the most significant

evidence yet—the resurrection—as a final testimony of the divine identity of Jesus.

(2) But another theme threads through the chapter as well. Jesus promised that he would not leave his followers desolate ([14:18](#)). He would not abandon them or leave them alone following his death and departure. Rather, in several places in his Farewell Discourse (chs. 14-17) Jesus promised to send the Spirit, the Paraclete, as his departing blessing on his followers. [John 20](#) is theologically linked to those chapters as fulfillment is linked to promise. John's description of the scene and the anointing of the Spirit evoke images set in these earlier chapters.

NIV Application Commentary, The - NIV Application Commentary, The – John: From biblical text...to contemporary life.

Christ Appears to Mary ([20:11-18](#))

We are likely to seek and find, when we seek with affection, and seek in tears. But many believers complain of the clouds and darkness they are under, which are methods of grace for humbling their souls, mortifying their sins, and endearing Christ to them. A sight of angels and their smiles, will not suffice, without a sight of Jesus, and God's smiles in him. None know, but those who have tasted it, the sorrows of a deserted soul, which has had comfortable evidences of the love of God in Christ, and hopes of heaven, but has now lost them, and walks in darkness; such a wounded spirit who can bear? Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations. See how Mary's heart was in earnest to find Jesus. Christ's way of making himself known to his people is by his word; his word applied to their souls, speaking to them in particular. It might be read, Is it my Master? See with what pleasure those who love Jesus speak of his authority over them. He

forbids her to expect that his bodily presence look further, than the present state of things. Observe the relation to God, from union with Christ. We, partaking of a Divine nature, Christ's Father is our Father; and he, partaking of the human nature, our God is his God. Christ's ascension into heaven, there to plead for us, is likewise an unspeakable comfort. Let them not think this earth is to be their home and rest; their eye and aim, and earnest desires, must be upon another world, and this ever upon their hearts, I ascend, therefore I must seek the things which are above. And let those who know the word of Christ, endeavour that others should get good from their knowledge.

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.

NOTE:

Mary Magdalene –

➤ Continuation of “unlikely” examples (Nineveh)

She appears in John for the first time at the cross ([19:25](#)) and enjoys this lengthy and important episode on Easter Sunday. Elsewhere in the Gospels she is mentioned in [Luke 8:1-3](#) among a list of women in Galilee who followed Jesus devoutly. Jesus had expelled numerous demons from her and, along with other women, she followed Jesus to Jerusalem to care for his needs ([Matt. 27:55](#)) and was even so bold as to stand with him on Golgotha ([John 19:25](#)).

Rolling stone tombs were meant to be opened and closed. The wheel-shaped stone door rolled on a stone track for access as other family members might be buried over the years. The Synoptics record the women's anxiety about who will assist them in moving the heavy stone. Mary's discovery that the tomb door has been rolled to one side suggested

immediately to her that someone has entered the tomb. Perhaps someone came that night—or was in the tomb at that moment. The Synoptics tell us that the women step inside, and perhaps Mary's flight ([20:2](#)) should be keyed to the appearance of an angel inside (see [Mark 16:5](#)). While John does not tell us these details, it is not hard to suppose that Mary examines the tomb's interior, sees that Jesus is gone, and flees to find some of the others.

Mary's use of the plural for herself ("and *we* don't know where they have put him") suggests that she is not alone but accompanied by other women (listed in the Synoptics). A woman would rarely venture out alone outside the city walls in the dark under such circumstances.

The scene, then, is not chaotic or confused. Rather, something purposeful has transpired here. If someone had simply stolen Jesus' body, surely the clothes would be missing, or at least strewn about the floor. But here is a scene in which the body is missing but the clothes appear undisturbed. Jesus' body has simply left them behind. We can also assume that a significant collection of burial spices rests nearby the clothes (see [19:40](#)).

Luke notes the tragedy that when the women at the tomb report their experiences to the disciples, the men are incredulous ("their words seemed to them like nonsense," [Luke 24:11](#)). John notes how Mary alone experiences the first and most profound moment with the resurrected Jesus once the two disciples have departed for home ([John 20:11-18](#)). Mary of Magdala is hardly in Jesus' inner circle when compared with the apostles; yet angels who refuse to appear

to the two men now unveil themselves to her as she examines the tomb. Each of the Gospels refers to angels present at (or in) the tomb; here Mary's worries are assuaged by their words. They do not solve the riddle of Jesus' disappearance but by their question ("Woman, why are you crying?") they suggest that sorrow is not what the present moment requires.

But it is their presence that is telling. It has *not* been robbers who removed the body. Rather, what has happened here stems from God's power. The scene buttresses once more that the tomb is evidence that Jesus is not dead— but it also interprets it, saying, in effect, that we are seeing divine involvement that validates the truth of Jesus (not unlike Peter's explanation in [Acts 2:32](#): "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact").

The solution for Mary's deeper grief will only come when she sees Jesus personally. Since she has only stooped in to look at the tomb ([20:11b](#)), she hears someone approach from behind and suddenly meets a man, whom she concludes must be the caretaker of the garden surrounding the tomb ([20:14](#)). He repeats the angels' words ("Woman, why are you crying?") but deflects the question to a more profound level: "Who is it you are looking for?" Her conclusion that perhaps this man has moved Jesus' body since he is the gardener indicates that she has not heard the man standing before her. Her mind remains on the problem of the tomb, while Jesus is trying to lift her to something else. Jesus' question points her in another direction. The reality of meeting him is more important than the riddle of the tomb. The tomb is now history, it is a cave to be disregarded (as it was among the earliest Christians), and only the living Jesus matters.

When Jesus utters Mary's name (20:16), at once she recognizes him and in her joy she uses the familiar Hebrew title "Rabboni" (which John translates for us as "Teacher"). Jesus' mild rebuke in [20:17](#) ("Do not hold on to me") implies that Mary has embraced him. But it is Jesus' explanation that has led to enormous confusion among interpreters. Jesus tells Mary not to hold him because he has not yet ascended to the Father ([20:17a](#)) but then directs her to go and tell his disciples that he is presently ascending to the Father ([20:17b](#)).

This means that the final step of "the hour" is advancing. Jesus' betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection are complete, and now all that remains is for him to return to the place from which he descended ([17:5](#)). But before he does so, Jesus must honor one more promise mentioned throughout his Farewell Discourse. In order that his followers will not be left desolate or orphaned ([14:18](#)), he will distribute to them the Holy Spirit as his parting gift.

Mary sees Jesus, and we are at once reminded of the farewell promise in [14:18-19](#). Before long, they would see him and rejoice. When Mary leaves this scene, she brings this very report back to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" ([20:18](#)). Mary is thinking that the resurrection of Jesus is Jesus' resumption of normal relations with his disciples. Mary's words remind us of what Jesus had said in [16:22](#), "I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." Mary is trying to hold on to the joy she now discovers in her resurrected Lord. In telling her not to

hold on, Jesus is saying that his permanent "return" and presence must come in another form. She cannot embrace what she finds in the garden. Things are going to change. Jesus' correction is a spiritual redirection away from Jesus' physical presence, a preparation for the Spirit that is about to be given.

We find this same theme in chapter 16. The *coming* of Jesus is on one level discovered within the resurrection—but it will also be discovered in a deeper manner in the coming of the Spirit-Paraclete (which is the coming of Jesus in yet a new form). The "not yet" of [20:17](#) thus matches the "not yet" of [7:39](#): "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified." The coming of the Spirit is still future ([20:22](#)), and this will be the momentous gift that will return Jesus to them permanently.

Therefore the story with Mary can be seen as an *interpretative vehicle* to stress the transition now underway in Jesus' life and in his relationship with each of his disciples. Mary is then charged to ready Jesus' disciples for his "coming," namely, his coming both in body (in the Upper Room) but more profoundly, his "coming" in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus underscores this change in relationship by pointing to his departure: "for I have not yet returned to the Father." But it should be read to imply that she is impeding his departure or interfering with his plans by embracing him. The Greek

sentence can easily be translated: "Do not cling to me. Since [Gk. *gar*] I have not yet ascended to the Father, go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending... Jesus' imminent departure is the basis for the mission to go to the disciples—not merely the reason for her to release Jesus. He wants to see them before he goes. Therefore Mary becomes a courier of news for the second time ([20:18](#)). She alone is the bearer of the report not only that the tomb was empty ([20:2](#)) but also that the resurrected Jesus has come and she has "seen" him, thus fulfilling Jesus' promise in [16:19-22](#): "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while *you will see me*" (italics added). - **NIV Application Commentary**