

**Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes**  
**April 7, 2024**  
**Rev. Dr. Andrew Keuer**

Sermon Text for Easter 2: John 20:11-18  
Title: “Mary’s Confusion” / Series: “Things He Healed”  
Schumann Hall Art Exhibit: “Stations of the Resurrection”

Core Observations of the Texts

- 1. Confusion:** There are numerous signs that Mary Magdalene is thoroughly disoriented as she stands by the empty tomb (who wouldn’t be!). First, let’s remember that Mary M. had known confusion in her past in the form of demon possession (see Luke 8:2). Second, in this text she is trying hard to understand the signs around her – the text twice uses the word “theorize” (NIV has “saw” – v12, v14), showing that she is contemplating and pondering what is real and true around her. Despite her pondering, she does not seem to recognize that the angels are actually angels, and she seems to misunderstand who Jesus is. Third, the leaders of Jesus’ group of followers, John and Peter, had fled back into the darkness of their protected room (v10), and this leaves Mary M. all alone.
  
- 2. Mary lingers:** It is remarkable that Mary’s response to confusion is to linger, wait and look for Jesus. She even “stands” (v11), which shows a readiness. And as she lingers, God begins to step-by-step reward her patient faith: First, God sends two angels to replace the two absent leaders (v12). Second, as she lingers further, she encounters a person whom she theorizes is the gardener (v14-15). But, of course, this is not the gardener ... or is it? Jesus does not deceive or wear a mask, and so here we have Jesus who comes to walk with His people in the cool of the day (see Gen 3:8), or maybe we can say that Jesus is the new Adam who is here to replant and cultivate the Garden of Eden around His people once again (see Romans 5:12-15; 1 Corinthians 15:45-46).
  
- 3. “Teacher!”:** In calling Jesus “Rabboni!”, we observe that Mary M. prized Christ’s teaching ministry above all else. So, how fitting it is that Jesus enters her life again in a way that reaffirms that treasured aspect of His person and ministry. We see Christ reaffirm her love for His teaching in two ways: First, Mary M. witnesses the fulfillment of John 1:51 (note the mention of “Rabbi” in 1:50 – a further hint that these two texts are linked). Second, Mary M. realizes that she is the woman spoken of in Christ’s prediction in John 16.19b-22.

Questions to Ponder

**1. Kinds of evidence:** Many historians have found this first resurrection appearance to be the most historically convincing, because it makes prominent a culturally unlikely witness and paints the authors themselves in a bad light (cf. Joachim Jeremias – see below). The sermon quoted Acts 1:3 and noted that the kinds of “infallible proof” we have here is less like a scientific proof and more like a set of hints to a personal encounter. Why might the Bible be more interested in hints rather than proofs?

**2. The Jesus kind of power:** The sermon contrasted Hollywood hero scenes with this entry of Jesus into Mary’s life. When has Jesus entered your life in a similarly quiet, empowering way?

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Joachim Jeremias’ comments are cited in Chapter 4 of Dale Allison’s *The Resurrection of Jesus* (2021).