

SMALL TALK

1. Was there a time when you were a skeptic about something...and it took a little convincing? What was it? What convinced you?

VIEWPOINT

2. Why were the disciples NOT expecting Jesus' death and resurrection even though Jesus predicted it repeatedly? What were they expecting? (Matthew 16:15-21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 20:21; 20:28; 26:2; Mark 9:31-32; 10:32-34; Luke 9:44-45)

Nobody was expecting the Messiah to be crucified and resurrected?

Why not? God revealed the prophecies in a way that was clear enough to bring about his plan, but not so clear as to cause the key players (the enemies of Jesus, religious leaders) to circumvent his plan.

The way God did this was by revealing aspects of the first coming and the second coming in a truncated way as if viewed through a telescope where the foothill events of the distant panoramic view of the first coming....looked like these were the same distance away as the mountain peak events associated with his second coming. In other words, they only thought in terms of his grand and glorious coming, not his first coming in humility, and the mystery of the kingdom as we know it, which includes Gentiles and Jewish believers.

Another way he did this was to reveal the death of the Messiah very cryptically. Genesis 3:15 spoke about it. Isaiah 53 spoke about it. Psalm 22 spoke about it. But the Israelites did not know these were prophecies about the Messiah.

The Israelites were expecting an eternal reign with an earthly ruler NOW.

So, death didn't enter their minds. It sounded like another parable when Jesus foretells it.

However, since his enemies did NOT believe he was the Messiah, when Jesus spoke about his death, they didn't filter out what he said as a parable, especially since they were already in the process of figuring out how to kill him. They remembered what he said, and posted guards to make sure his body stayed put.

It didn't work.

3. When Jesus died (and before he was raised) what did the disciples believe about him?

When Jesus died, it shattered every hope they had. They suddenly didn't know what to think. They probably thought the worst. They had wasted 3 and a half years on a fraud. They were in a very dark place of confusion. It took quite a bit for them to assimilate and process the surprising events when the tomb was discovered to be empty.

They thought they were horribly wrong about Jesus. It wasn't until they were convinced that he rose from the dead that they could build a new paradigm, a new way of understanding what it was all about? Everything starts to come together for them only after the resurrection, and after Jesus explains the scriptures to them, and how all these pieces fit together.

4. **READ John 20.** What convinced the disciples that Jesus was not a fraud? What convinced the disciples that Jesus was alive?
 - They thought they were horribly wrong about Jesus. It wasn't until they were convinced that he rose from the dead that they could build a new way of understanding what it was all about? Everything starts to come together for them only after the resurrection, and after Jesus explains the scriptures to them (Luke 24), and how all these pieces fit together.
 - It was NOT the empty tomb that convinced them.
 - It was the live face to face encounters with the resurrected Jesus that convinced them!
5. What was Thomas' confession? Did Jesus accept this confession or deny it? What did an angel do with a similar expression from John? (Revelation 22:8-9)

- Thomas declared “My Lord, and My God!”
- Jesus accepted this confession at face value!
- Angels refuse to accept such a confession because it is wrong to call an Angel “Lord” or “God”.
- BUT It is RIGHT to call the Lord of all lords, and the King of all kings, LORD and GOD.

GETTING PERSONAL

6. What skeptic(s) are you praying for? Have you ever had a conversation with them about Jesus’ resurrection? If not, why not? If so, how did that go?

PRACTICE!

7. How and what can you practice so that it might be easier to talk about the realities of the good news in your life?

Holy Week: (part 2) Lively Solution

Have you ever felt like life is filled with darkness?

Mary Magdalene sure did.

John 20:1 (NIV) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene ...

The outline this morning has no blanks to fill in. There are only word clouds. When you feel like life is very dark, your emotions are not linear or logical. **Circle the words** you most identify with as we track with Mary Magdalene from here deadly difficulty, a crisis of faith, to God's Lively solution, hers, yours, and my resurrected Lord! Let's begin.

Thursday Midnight

- ... Was when Mary's new found life of Hope and joy began to unravel.
- Some very distraught disciples returned from the disastrous scene of the arrest of Jesus, breathless, scared and confused.
- That very night Jesus had told them to WATCH and PRAY! They blew it then. They must not blow it now.
- THEY knocked loudly at the door where the ladies were staying!
- Quickly telling them all that happened they began to pray in earnest!

FRIDAY AM

- Peter and John returned with the bad news
- John did most of the talking, which was weird. Peter did not look well at all.
- John told them about the farce of a trial at the high priest's house.
- And how even now they were taking Jesus to the **Roman Governor's headquarters insisting that Pilate put him on trial for treason!**
- Somehow whole crowds of people had already heard about what was happening. *How did the news travel so fast? People began streaming toward the trial.*
- **Mary** and all the disciples mingled within the crowd standing toward the back so as not to draw any attention to themselves.
- Would they be arrested also?
- The trial was so ridiculously frustrating.
- The governor publicly declared his innocence, but to appease the crowd, he **condemned Jesus to crucifixion anyway!**

- **For Mary, what she saw, heard, and felt was nothing short of the worst nightmare ever, and she had had some terrible nightmares. But this one was real.**
- At first Mary and the Mother of Jesus with the other women are watching from the back, but then probably because they wanted to hear Jesus, and let him see that they were there for him. Went up close. The young disciple John went with them.

FRIDAY NOON

Matthe, Mark, and Luke record that “At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon”.

- This was no solar eclipse. This was more like the plague in Egypt with a darkness that was felt for three days only this time for three hours.
- Everyone was confused by this. The mocking people stood horrified and speechless. Some people began to leave.
- Mary Magdalene and Jesus’ mother Mary stood, sobbing, clinging to one another for mutual support.

FRIDAY 3PM

- Jesus died.
- There was a loud rock splitting earthquake.
- The remaining crowd shuddered in fear, terrified.
- As they were taking down his body, John saw that this was more than Jesus’ Mother could cope with.
- In obedience to Jesus’ request from the cross, John held her up, and began walking her away from the scene and took her home.
- Mary Magdalene and the remaining women would not leave him. They would see where they would take his body.
- Once they secured him in the tomb...
- They wept there...till they knew they must leave. Sabbath had already begun. They made their way to the place where they were staying, a mile and ½ away.

FRIDAY NIGHT

Friday night was the worst night of Mary’s life. Horrible scenes kept playing and replaying in her mind.

Darkness was closing in on her. **Something sinister** was again welling up within her. Something familiar. She had known this kind of darkness before Jesus had set her free from demons. **Anger and hate was welling up inside. She was nursing it. Just then another memory came crashing through, but different somehow.**

Luke 23:34 (NIV) ... “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

...

She felt herself resisting the idea and it was a very dark night.

SATURDAY AM

- How ironic that Saturday (Sabbath) was supposed to be dedicated to worship and to REST.
- **Mary could do neither.**
- It seemed nobody in Jerusalem could.
- Everyone in Jerusalem was on edge *THAT* Sabbath Saturday!
- **There was a lot of whispering that day.** *I heard that of his own disciples betrayed him. He committed suicide. They found him this morning. The one she heard it from did not shy away from using his name. Judas was dead.*

SATURDAY PM

Their mocking words at the cross haunted her.

“He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! [Mark 15:31 (NIV)]

- *She had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.*

QUESTIONS ASSAULTED HER throughout the night:

- *Why had he not saved himself? Were the chief priests right?*
- *Was he a liar and a blasphemer? **Or worse, was there no God at all?***
- *“Why should she go on living? “What was there to live for now?”*

SUNDAY AM

*“Early on the first day of the week, **while it was still dark**, Mary Magdalene ...”*

...was **RESOLVED** along with a small band of women to go to his tomb to honor Jesus anyway! **THERE IT WAS: HONOR HIM ANYWAY**

- He deserved to be honored.
- She would honor him despite the risk.
- She got up to do what they agreed to do.
- It was the right thing to do!
- **Imperceptibly her darkness was beginning to lift.**

RETURNING TO THE PATH THAT IS RIGHT, THINGS BECOME CLEARER.

- **He WAS a good man.** No more doubts there!
- **He WAS not a liar.** No more doubts there!
- **Jesus valued and honored THEM so they were going to value and honor HIM.** No doubts there!

This band of WOMEN all felt the same way. WHY?

- Jesus honored and valued them. He believed they made valuable contributions to His Kingdom.

But what of his Kingdom now? Was it nothing but a crushed dream?

Then, another EARTHQUAKE interrupted all their thoughts and questions!

- And a quick **flashback** to Friday's horrible scenes was **immediate and visceral. Fear gripped them again!**
- Then the quaking stopped.
- What should they do now? Retreat and go home? NO!
- **THEY WERE RESOLVED! THEY WERE GOING TO THE TOMB ANYWAY!**

Someone said, *"Who will roll the stone away?"*

But they rounded the bend, and needed no answer.

- **MARY GASPED!**
- **The stone had already been rolled away.**
- **BUT MARY THOUGHT THE WORST.**

"Where have they taken him?! What have they done with him now!!!"

- Mary decided, **We have to get help!** Something was dreadfully wrong! She ran to get help, found and told Peter and John her fears.

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" **John 20:2 (NIV)**

- Peter and John went out, heading for the tomb.
- Exhausted, she fell behind.
- As she approached, Peter and John were already running back for the others without saying much.
- She went on to the tomb. The other ladies were gone!
- She began to weep again.
- Weeping, she **stooped to look inside the tomb. Two men in white were there!!**

John 20:13 (NIV) *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."*

- She self consciously averted her face which was now a crying mess, and turned and was immediately startled
- Standing there behind her was someone assumed must be the gardener.
- She averted her face again.

(15) *"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 immediately turned to him, "Rabboni!" which means teacher in Aramaic.
- She who had just imagined stooping to lift and single handedly carry Jesus' dead body away, dropped and clung to his living body like she would never let go!

John 20:17 (NIV) *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..."*

Never forget how in the dark you once were. Others are still there. They need to know. Now, go!

Mary was given the honor of being the first evangelist to spread the good news that *He's alive*.

Mary did not want to, but she obeyed. In fact, she RAN, her sandals slapping in rhythm with her beating heart! *He's alive! He's alive! He's alive!*

Who do you need to go and tell!