



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 8, 2012  
Easter Festival Worship  
Sermon Text: [John 20:11-18](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 25:6-9](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 118](#)  
Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 15:19-26](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Mark 16:1-8](#)

### Our Crucified Risen Savior

It doesn't really matter how many times you've encountered it, it just never feels natural. It never feels right. There is always pain. There is always a gnawing. Death always feels wrong. Something inside does not accept that we will not hear that voice of our loved one, that we won't touch them, we won't be able to be with them and discuss things with them and experience their laughter ever again. Grief counselors can talk until they are blue in the face about how it's just a part of life and you have to learn to accept it, but there is a part of us that just can't accept it, and for good reason.

It isn't natural. It's not the way the Lord originally created us. It's a result of sin. Every time we come into contact with death, we are reminded that we are sinners. We have offended our God. We know that God says the wages of sin is death, not just physical, but also spiritual. Every death is a reminder of that truth.

I just read to you about Mary. Mary didn't accept death. It caused her pain. It caused her hurt. She knew Jesus had died. She was there. She was there standing next to his mother and saw everything that happened while Jesus was on the cross. She saw him there as the light when out of his eyes and he died after crying out to his heavenly Father. She was there and saw them take him down from the cross. She saw his blood soaked into the wood on the cross. She knew he was dead. But she didn't accept it. It wasn't natural. It wasn't right.

So she and the other women went early that Sunday morning to do one last service for their Lord, the One they loved, to see his body again, to finish the preparations that couldn't be done because of the Sabbath. It was that one last act of love she wanted to do for the One that she loved. But her world got turned upside down when she got there, right?

She gets there and the stone is rolled away, which had to shake them up and quicken their pulse a little bit. Then they look inside and there's no body. The other Gospel writers tell us that she went and told the disciples. Peter and John ran out there. A lot of help they were. They looked in. They went in and saw it and said, "You're right. He's not here." Then they left her. She's left there.

As she's left there, the tears come, not the gentle cry of someone who is merely sad. This is the gut wrenching wails of someone who is caught in the clutches of grief, the kind of grief where you feel like you just can't endure it. You think it might just kill you

right then and there. Maybe you've experienced it. I have to believe that's what Mary was experiencing right then and there.

In those tears, we are told in John she looks into the tomb again, and this time something is different. There are two guys in there, one at the head and one at the feet where Jesus' body had been. They ask her this question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Notice that she doesn't say, "Because Jesus is dead." Grief has got her all twisted and turned up. She knows he's dead. But she says "They've taken his body. His body is gone." That's what has her thrown every which way from Sunday.

Think about this for a second. Mary's grief was of such a magnitude that she is talking to angels and that doesn't even phase her. She's just so wrapped up in her grief that she doesn't understand she is talking with heavenly beings. That's how it is with us, isn't it? When we grieve, especially when we grieve as those who have no hope, we just don't know what to think or say or do.

So then she turns away from this conversation. She turns around and someone is right there all of a sudden, right in her face. I don't know if it's her grief or her tears. I don't know if she was in such great grip of grief that everything was moving slow motion and almost phantom like that she didn't recognize that this is Jesus, but she thinks maybe this is the gardener. Maybe here is a glimmer of hope. "He'll tell me where the body went. Tell me where it is. I don't care what you do. Tell me where it is and I will get the body and take care of it."

Then comes the question again. "Why are you weeping?" Then comes one simple word, "Mary". Then through the tears and through the grief, the eyes of faith see that Jesus has risen. And her world changes. The uncertainty, the "I don't know what's going on but man, am I happy to see my Savior! He's right here in front of me." She cries out "Rabboni!" (My teacher) and she throws herself at his feet and hangs on. She doesn't ever want to let go of him again. Maybe now she is beginning to understand all those things he had said earlier. He would die. He would rise again. They are true.

Which means everything he told us is true. Which means even though we are sinners who deserve the wages of sin, which is eternal death, it's not going to be ours, because the One who came to Mary and called out her name is the One who comes to us and calls out our name at our baptism. He is the One that loves us with an everlasting love, the One that carried our sins to the cross, the One that lived perfectly where you and I have doubted and went our own way and strayed away from our Lord. He took all of those sins and washed them away through his life and his death.

"My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me" ([John 10:27](#)). Mary didn't recognize him before but when she heard his voice, she knew it was him. Now the tears come again, but they're not the same tears as before. These are the tears of someone who understands what joy is, that grief replaced with a joy that we always say passes all understanding. Put yourself in Mary's shoes. Same tear ducts, completely different process. These are the tears of joy of someone who knows the victory has

been won for them. What a wonderful gift God gave to Mary that day, to see her Savior, to see and hang onto the feet, to be that far away from the wounds in his feet but know now it's different. Now he's alive again. The wound and death couldn't hold him. Think about what that means.

Jesus then gave her something to do to serve him. It wasn't with spices now. Now her service was to be "Go and tell the disciples that I'm alive. Go and tell them that I'm going to my God and their God. Go and tell them that never again, never alone, never without God" because Jesus won the victory. His wounds defeated death, vanquished death. The wound of death is gone for them and for us.

Now death isn't going to be the end of you. It isn't going to be the end of me. It's not going to be the end of anyone who knows and believes that Jesus lived and died and took away their sins. Yes, it's still going to hurt. Yes, there's still the sense of loss. There's still grief. But now in our grief there is hope because death has been defeated. We die physically, but we won't die spiritually. Hell is not in our future because Jesus took away our sins. He gave us the gift of faith when he poured out his Spirit on us in baptism.

Think about this. This body that hung on the cross paid for your sins. This body that was in the grave to sanctify your grave, this body that Mary was hanging onto that first Easter morning, it's the same body he gives to you. It's the same body he gives to you to say you are forgiven. His blood that stained that cross is the same blood he gives to you in, with and under the wine. As we come to his table, in this meal he gives us forgiveness. It's as though he whispers in our ear "You're forgiven. You're mine. You don't have to fear death. Death has been defeated. I did it for you. All this, not just for the world, but for you."

He says to us, "Baptized into my death and baptized into my resurrection. Just as I came out of death, I'm going to bring you out of death. Alive, never to die again." He tells us that's when the celebration will really begin. (See [1 Corinthians 15.](#))

Christ has risen! He has risen indeed! Alleluia!