

Intimate Authority: Easter's Enlistment

This is the seventh and concluding post of my Holy Week Meditations for 2012. Please [click here for the archive list](#) of posts. Annette and I, as well as the staff here at [Desert Stream Ministries](#), wish you a deeply blessed Easter. He is Risen!

—

Intimate Authority: Easter's Enlistment

Why was Mary Magdalene the first disciple Jesus entrusted with His resurrection? According to John's Gospel, Peter and John raced to the empty tomb but could not comprehend Christ resurrected.

Both John the Beloved and Peter the Rock saw evidence but did not see. After hearing countless prophecies from Jesus, 'they still did not understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead.' (Jn 20:9)

Peter and John left the empty tomb and went home, perhaps too weary and overwhelmed to grasp the truth. One can see and not see. Jesus entrusted this sight to Mary Magdalene. How strange for her. She wanted the powerful disciples to make sense of the empty tomb. She bid them come and they left, disoriented. Mary lingered at the tomb, weeping.

She wept and lingered there. That was her great gift, this evidence of intimacy with Jesus. For what else better defines intimate reliance upon another but weeping and lingering? Love alone provokes tears for another; love alone compels us to wait, to abide, to linger. These simple expressions of intimacy—tears and lingering—are the basis for her authority.

From her first encounter with Jesus, washing His feet with her tears as the Pharisee looked on aghast, to this last recorded encounter at the tomb, Mary wept. She embodied a tender and profound dependence upon Jesus. In brokenness, she clung to Him; His holiness absorbed her shame and transformed Mary into a radiant, radical disciple.

Naked surrender to Jesus—a gift of her more responsive gender and of her heightened vulnerability to false intimacy—made Mary trustworthy. She knew her cure. Lustful men had only served to fracture her, to take pieces of her; religious men then condemned her for it. Only One gave her form, made her whole. Jesus' life became hers.

God chose an ex-prostitute to bear witness of that Life—the Resurrection--the most important event in human history. Are you beginning to understand why the Roman Catholic Church named her the 'Apostle of the Apostles?'

Mary's life with Jesus testified: with Him, she could do anything. When He died, she discovered the painful corollary: without Him, nothing. That's why the grief. Grief grounded her at the tomb. Hope sustained her.

She had nowhere else to go. So she waited at the tomb, weeping and lingering. Here we see the deep broken ground of her heart, awaiting reunion with the Beloved. Her response to two angels concerning her tears is telling: she was not awed by them but concerned only about Him—'Someone took Jesus away—where is HE?' (Jn 20: 12, 13)

Then Jesus appeared to her, glorified and not yet apparent to Mary. She asked Him to tell her where Jesus was so she could retrieve His body from the hands of temple robbers. He spoke her name, opened her eyes, and reclaimed her life with His raised one. (vs. 14-16)

Reunion. Grief transformed to joy. My hunch is she wanted Him, desired only to be with Him, to weep with gratitude and linger with Him, alone. Jesus dethrones her desire. Instead of extending comfort, Jesus commissions her: 'Don't hold onto Me. Tell my brothers!' (v.17)

I think of thousands of peers and friends around the world whose lives mirror Mary's. Most know deep brokenness. Surrendered to Jesus, they in turn know Jesus well. He is their integrity, their wholeness. Will we hear Jesus' words afresh this Easter? Will we, grateful for every sin He has assumed, every wound He has won, every cross He enables us to carry, not hold onto Him? Will we rather, empowered afresh with the Spirit of His new life, run with Mary and proclaim from our depths: 'I have seen the Lord!' (v. 18)

Will we stop waiting for someone else to do what we alone can do? Will we stop deferring to 'important' disciples but rather ask Jesus to make us faithful witnesses? To proclaim how Life has subsumed our brokenness and set us free?

I urge you this Easter: follow Mary's example. Rise up and reveal His new life through yours. Easter has enlisted you as a member of the Magdalene Army.

'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back...

You will spread out to the left and to the right; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. Do not be afraid, you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace, you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth, and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is His Name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He is called the God of all the earth.' (Is. 54: 2-5)