

Text: John 20:11-18. Six months until Easter celebration. **October 16, 2016.**

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

How do you feel at Easter? Aw man, happy. Joyful. Exuberant! Beyond happy. Easter is the greatest day of the year! The Lord is risen! Jesus is my Savior! My sins are forgiven! I'm going to heaven! I'm going to live forever with a perfect body. I love the hymns. It's one day of the year I don't mind getting up early. I hear you, brothers and sisters. And because of all that happiness and joy and singing, it's easy for us to forget what it was like for Mary. You see her here, front and center, almost every time you come to worship. But have you really looked into her eyes? Can you see the veil of tears covering them? Have you really stood in her shoes? Just 36 hours earlier, she watched as her Lord hung on a cross. It was the darkest day of her life. Literally. All day darkness. In the middle of the day. Just 36 hours earlier, she watched her friend die. One of her closest friends, her teacher, her Savior? Mary watched the death of Jesus. She helped bury him in this tomb. After some likely sleepless nights, she went to the tomb while it was still dangerously dark for the internment. Put yourself in Mary's shoes. She wasn't dancing to the tomb with a brand new dress and pretty bonnet. She was crying all the way, walking to the grave where she had helped place the body of the dead Jesus. She wasn't singing, "I know that my Redeemer lives." She was sobbing. My Lord is dead! Put yourself in her shoes. Look at the tears. See the sobs. Feel your heart go out to this heartbroken woman.

She was so distraught, she wasn't even scared by angels. Never happened before. Never happened since. Try to find another time in the Bible that an angel's message doesn't start with, "Do not be afraid." This time they didn't have to. Mary was already so afraid. The stone was rolled away. There was no Jesus. Where is he? What am I going to do? "Why am I crying?" Are you serious? They, some nameless, rude people, have taken my Lord away and I don't have the first clue where he is. He cast seven demons out of me. No one else would even talk to me. He taught God's Word like I've never heard it before. He brought good news, forgiveness, love. He explained God's Word with an authority no other person ever had. Why am I crying? You can't be serious? What's the matter with you? Why aren't you crying? Jesus is dead. Jesus is gone. Forever!

And who's this guy? Oh, and again with the crying? Dude! Where'd you put him? Just tell me. Give me one last second with him, one last chance. I'll do anything for him. I'll carry his dead body. Now, realize that didn't make much sense for one person to carry the body of a dead man. But put yourself in Mary's shoes. She's not making any sense. She's just been to a funeral. She got up early to walk to an internment. And now Jesus is gone.

How could she not recognize it was Jesus? Hadn't she walked and talked with Jesus? Hadn't she seen him just hours before? Didn't she know what he looked like? We could blame the tears, maybe that clouded her vision. We could point to other times that people didn't recognize Jesus after his resurrection. But come on! Have you ever gone to cemetery and expected to see the person whose name is on the headstone? If you went to put flowers on grandma's grave and someone showed up, grandma is the last person you are expecting to see. Jesus is standing right in front of her and she did not realize that it was Jesus.

How many times has Jesus stood right in front of us and we do not realize that it is Jesus? By Christ's authority, I forgive you all your sins. Really, Jesus? All my sins? There's that big, bad one that I haven't told anyone. I wish you didn't know about it. I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Really? That's just water and a baby. That's really Jesus there? Come on! How many times has Jesus stood right in front of you, talking to you in his Word, through his Word and we haven't

listened? How many times has the Bible sat on the shelf, a pristine acknowledgment that I am confirmed, but in such new condition it shows I haven't listened to Jesus much since.

But then, with just one word, one word, Jesus makes himself known. Mary. One precious word. Her name. Mary. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name. And his sheep listen to his voice. And now she knows. And in what might be the greatest recognition in history of the world, she says just one word, "Rabboni." Teacher! Lord! Savior! Jesus! He's not dead! He's alive! He really is the Lord. He really is my Savior. He really rose! I will really rise! Jesus! Mary does what anyone in her shoes would do. She grabs on to Jesus for dear life. For dear eternal life. She's never letting go of Jesus again. She's going to cling and hang on and never let this guy out of her grasp or out of her sight. Can you blame her? What would you do if you went to grandma's grave and grandma showed up? How would you react? But Jesus had better plans, higher plans, eternal plans. Mary, don't hold on to me now. I want you to hold on to me forever. Mary, don't cling to your sight. Cling to me by faith, then you will have me now, and always. Mary, don't try to hold me down on earth, let me lift you up to heaven. I'm ascending. I'm preparing a perfect place for you. There will be no graves to visit there. There will be no tears to veil my presence. There will be no grief to keep you from recognizing me. Mary, I'm going to take you to be with me in heaven.

Now, we really want to be in Mary's shoes, don't we? Now, we really are in Mary's shoes, aren't we? We are walking by the same faith by which Mary walked. We are walking to the same heaven, with Jesus, to which Mary walked. We are not living by sight. We are living by faith. We are not needing to the cling to the physical presence of Jesus. We cling to his Word, which will never pass away. We can cling to his wonderful promise, just as Mary did. "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am." We cling to those wonderful words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In those words, the Good Shepherd spoke your name. The Good Shepherd claimed you as one of his precious sheep, so precious the Shepherd shed his blood, gave his life, rose again and said, "You are mine!" I could understand today if you hold on to Christ's body a little longer than you normally do before you eat it. But don't cling to that body as though you are trying to bring Jesus down to earth. Savor that body that will lift you up to heaven. Yes, we can stand in Mary's shoes of faith, Mary's shoes of trusting in Jesus' Word, Mary's shoes of looking forward to heaven.

And Mary's shoes still have work to do on earth. Jesus told Mary what her shoes were to be busy doing. Go to my brothers and sisters. Stop there. Jesus, what did you say? My brothers and sisters? Jesus, I've heard you call us many things: disciples, followers, even friends, but brothers and sisters? Brothers and sisters? Not lazy good for nothings who couldn't keep awake for one hour in the garden? Not traitors who bailed on you at the first sign of trouble? Not scaredy cats who will hide behind closed doors? Not even grief stricken can't see you through tears, can't recognize you through the fear, think you are the gardener because I can't remember a thing you said? You are none of that, Mary. You are my sister. Tell Peter and John and James, "You are none of that. You are my brothers."

Brothers and sisters, put yourself in Mary's shoes, because you wear the same shoes she does as sisters of Jesus. You wear the same robe, monogrammed with Jesus' name she wears. You wear the same special status. Brother! Sister! Jesus doesn't call you angry temper loser. Jesus calls you brother. Jesus doesn't call you can't really be a Christian because you can't get rid of that temptationer. Jesus calls you sister! Brother! That's what you are to Jesus! Sister! That's all that Jesus sees. Not rich or poor or fat or thin or fast or slow or smart or stupid. Brother! Sister! Brother! Sister! That's what you are! Those are the shoes of Mary in which you stand! Don't those shoes feel pretty nice?

Don't you just want to do exactly what Mary did and run with that news, "I have seen the Lord!"? Literally, Mary anged to the disciples. She announced the best news ever. I have seen the Lord. Mary didn't need an eight week training course. She just needed to tell what she had seen and heard. She didn't need to memorize every Bible passage to answer every objection. She just needed her feet fitted with the readiness that comes from knowing the good news. Mary's shoes were quick to spread good news. Mary's shoes are the shoes of an angel. Mary's shoes feel pretty awesome to wear. Don't you love being in Mary's shoes? Amen.