

"Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying... she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "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 turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ 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, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

_____ Silence can be loud can't it. Silence can be heavy. Silence can be unsettling. Even just that brief moment of silence that the beginning of this sermon can be overwhelming, especially when you are expecting something.

It kind of makes sense for Mary to weep at the tomb doesn't it? From the chaos of the previous days the silence was something that was deafening.

The silence is loud. The cries of crucify, the curtain tearing, the earth quaking, it's all over. All that is there at that tomb, in the darkness of the early morning, is _____.

That graveyard was loud with silence.

At the grave there were no hosannas, there was no woman at the well, there was no Lazarus, there wasn't 5,000 fed with bread, there weren't the cleansed lepers or the man cleansed from demon possession, there was nothing. There was nothing. There wasn't even a corpse for Mary to grieve over there was nothing.

Mary wasn't expecting much. But she was expecting something, she was hoping for something. Even if that something was just a body. Even if that something was just a cold corpse. Just a clammy, stiff, dead body of Jesus, wrapped in linen cloths. Just her friend, just her Jesus that she could dress with spices if nothing else. Because that body of Jesus, was at least something, something that she could see. It would have been something that could fill that emptiness that silence. **"They have taken my Lord away"**

But God was silent, God seemed gone.

I think some of you know all too well how loud silence can be. Even when there is a conversation between two friends and there is a long pause, it seems to drag out forever and there is a feeling of awkward emptiness. In the middle of the night, lying in bed and there is thick quiet. When you have a heart-wrenching argument with your spouse or your friend and all you can do is sit there in the palpable silence, painfully aware of how quiet it is.

And some of you have experienced the most powerful, terrible, awful silence that can ever be. It's when you have been beside the casket of a loved one. And there is that sickening silence. When you have gone to the graveyard and looked upon a tombstone. And the only sound is empty air all around. And Mary Magdalene was definitely feeling the power of that silence that Easter morning. Where her teacher, her friend, her Lord was dead, was quiet, was silent. There's not much that can break the silence of death.

And in those moments, you know that you can't break the silence with anything. In order to break the silence of a conversation you can't just use any words; it needs to be something profound, something thoughtful, something that is worthy of being said. In a pause in an argument, it has to be something sufficient to break that terrible stifled air.

Death is the most awful quiet. It is the most powerful. From the first one on this earth, the silence of death has always been the last and final silence that we all dread. The silence that brings pain, the silence that brings terror, the silence that scares.

That powerful silence of death can only be broken by something even more powerful. The intensity of the emptiness can only be filled by something that is sufficient. The stagnation of death can only be conquered by something that is enough. And it was conquered for that woman weeping in the wee hours of that morning at the grave when a man said: "Mary".

If anyone else said that word, it would not have been enough to break it. If Peter had said that word it would not be enough to fill that void. If Lazarus had said that word it would not have been enough to get out of that stillness. No, but those words were spoken by someone, someone whose voice was more than powerful enough to break the still morning air, more than enough to fill the emptiness, more than powerful enough to kill the silence of death. Because it was Jesus himself who spoke: "Mary".

This was not some consoling word from a friend, this was the one whom she grieved. This was the one whose absence made her lost, this was her teacher, this was her lord, this was her Jesus.

Mary was hoping for just something, but she got everything. The one who was gone, who was silent was silent no longer. This was the Jesus who had been laid cold and stiff in the rock and was warm and breathing. This was her Jesus who had promised that he would rise from the dead, from the silence, and now he stood before her, face to face, promise fulfilled, life proven, Resurrection attained. Jesus Christ rising from death itself was the only thing that was powerful enough to kill the stillness of that Easter morning, and he did it. That silence was strong, that silence was loud but Jesus beat that quiet.

And you Christian, know that same truth. You know that no amount of "my condolences" or "Sorry for your loss", or eloquent cards, or tight hugs can ever truly rid you of the pain of the silence of death. There is only one thing that can destroy the awful silence of death,

and that's the voice of Jesus, resurrected on Easter morning. There is one thing that brings joy to a pain-filled heart and that is Jesus' heart beating full of life on Easter.

Because Jesus rising from the dead on Easter means something not just for him, not just for the disciples, not just for Mary Magdalene: it means something for every Christian who is faced or has faced the silence of death. It's one of the boldest and most dearly held truths of Scripture. It is perhaps the most misunderstood by the world: That Christians live in a fantasy world that promises life will be all amazing all of the time. But Easter does not prove that, it proves something far more audacious. Christianity never promises a life that is free from pain. Jesus never promises that there will never be tears that will fall from your eyes. God never promises that death is not a reality. But Easter proves that those things are not the final say.

Easter means that death, your death, has been emptied of its sting. The quiet has not won. The quiet is not forever. Because Jesus promised that just as I rose from a cold corpse alive. Just as I walked out of that grave, so too, when you die. You yourself, and every single other person who has died in Christ will be resurrected to life, just as I promised, just as I proved. Death may be a reality, but it is no match for the reality of the resurrection. Its power is pummeled, its hurt is healed, its sting is slashed, by the Resurrection. The silence is only temporary because it's only a matter of time before my Savior who cracked open the tomb will crack open the sky. And all of the dead in him will rise, will have souls reunited with their bodies. And they will live, and breath, and walk just as Jesus did.

While that empty tomb was Mary's worst fear, the empty tomb was turned into Mary's greatest joy. My lord, my teacher, my Jesus is not there. He is risen. He lives. He walks. He rules. And Mary, that woman who was so consumed with that tomb, sprints from it to say to others: "I have seen the Lord!" She left her tears behind at the empty tomb. She left them behind in that silent empty tomb.

And you and I can do the same thing as Mary. We can leave our sins behind knowing they are forgiven, because you know what, that tomb is empty. We can leave death behind at the tomb knowing it is only temporary because you know what that tomb is empty. We can leave the tears behind knowing that we will see our loved ones again because that tomb is empty. _____ He is not here, he has risen. Amen.