



Sermon Growth Guide

October 11, 2020

The Beautiful Story - Beauty Restored

John 20:11-18

Key Verse: John 20:18

“Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ And she told them that he had said these things to her.”

Big Idea: In Jesus, each one of us finds restoration that we cannot bring about ourselves.

Foundations

Welcome to week nine of *The Beautiful Story* when we get to celebrate Easter! You see, Jesus didn't just die to pay the debt of sin; Jesus rose again. He walked out of that tomb, saw His friends, then ascended into heaven! And now, all who call on His name are brought into His resurrection life. They share His citizenship in the eternal Kingdom.

The Gospel is the good news that beauty defeats death and beauty is restored. It's the news of what Jesus has done to enter into the masterpiece. The news that Jesus has come to be the restorer of beauty, to take the stain away so that all of creation would begin to be restored to beauty. That each of us would be restored to the image of God within us. The gospel is news, not of how to fix yourself with moralistic carefulness, not of how to accept yourself in your fallen and soiled state, not of how to save yourself, but that Jesus has come to bring life, to seek and to save the lost.

We see the beginnings of this right here with Mary Magdalene. In Mary's heart, a turning happens when she starts to believe that maybe, just maybe, things are shifting now toward the beautiful hope of a beautiful restoration of all things under God's mighty hand. Can you believe it's possible?

Open and close your time of further study and application in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to guide and guard your time in His Word.

Understanding God's Word

Reread verse 14. Often times in Scripture, people miss God at work or don't recognize Jesus for who He is. Describe a time when you looked back and realized that God had been moving in your life even though you were unaware of it at the time.

Reread verse 16. Pastor Tim described the “turning” in this verse as a significant shift in Mary's life. When did you make the decision to turn your life toward Jesus? If you haven't, what's kept you from doing so?

Applying God's Word

Pastor Tim reminded us this week that we are deeply loved. We are works of art, made by God, made in His image. However, it is often easy to forget this, or to feel like we have become marred beyond repair.

Take time this week to remind yourself of God's irrevocable love for you. Allow that to imbed in your mind. Accept that there is nothing you can do to change God's love for you. Consider experimenting with a new practice this week. Each morning, as you get out of bed, offer a brief prayer of gratitude using these simple words: “Thank you Lord for this beautiful day and for loving me.”

Witnessing God's Word

Reread verse 18. Mary brings good news to the disciples when she bears witness to the events outside the tomb. How has Jesus moved in your life? Who might He be calling you to share these stories with? Pray for this person by name as you close this time.

First Christmas, now Easter. Hmm. If you're wondering why we are getting all of these done now, yes, you're on to me. I've decided to take 2021 off entirely. 2020 counts for two years! No. This is the story of all things, **The Beautiful Story**, and these are the critical moments. A beautiful God made a beautiful world and put beautiful people in it. That beauty was threatened, marred, muddied by our own selfishness and sin. But God was too invested in us and in the world, and in beauty, to let it all go to waste. God made the beautiful promise, sustained us with beautiful hope until, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son into the world, our **Beautiful Savior**. Last week we talked about the day ugliness won, the day beauty was broken when Jesus died on the cross. But He didn't stay dead.

If Jesus stayed dead, that would be a good story. God made the world. The world denied God and fell into destruction. A cost was required. God sent His Son who paid that cost. Debt paid. Peace restored. That would be a good story, but not a **Beautiful Story**. Jesus didn't just die to pay the debt of sin; Jesus rose again. Jesus didn't stay dead. Jesus walked out of that tomb, saw His friends, then ascended into heaven. Jesus, in His humanity now, Jesus ascended into heaven marking a commitment from God that all who would follow Him, all who would call on His name—God is committed to bring them into eternal life, resurrection life and everlasting citizenship in His eternal Kingdom. That's a beautiful story. Death doesn't win. Ugliness doesn't get the last word. Beauty defeats death. Jesus defeats death. And what starts here is the restoration of beauty. It starts right here, with Mary Magdalene.

Mary came before sunrise to treat the body of Jesus with oil and spices. Things not finished on Friday when Jesus died and was quickly laid in a tomb before the Sabbath. She saw the tomb open and empty, so she ran and told the disciples. They ran and saw what she saw, then went home. Mary is still there, weeping, dejected. Hope is lost. Her energy sapped, she just stares at the tomb. This is the depression state, the hopeless

stage, the darkness wins moment. "Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 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'" (John 20:11-13). Woman, why are you crying. She's crying because she knows; she knows what she knows. Jesus is dead. His body is stolen. Even the comfort of honoring His dead body is taken away. She cries because of loss. Grief. Beauty is broken. Hope is dashed. That's why she's crying.



"At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 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'" (John 20:14-15). She did not realize that it was Jesus. The gospel is not a set of beliefs to adopt or a philosophy of life to pursue. The gospel is not a moral path to resolve to walk upon. The gospel is news of an event, news of what God has done. But not only news; it is news which, when believed—when realized—has the power to change your life. Mary has some realizing to do. She did not realize. Jesus repeats the question of the angels: "Woman, why are you crying?" Then He digs deeper. She has some realizing to do, some knowledge and understanding to gain. "Who is it you are looking for?" The irony is that she is looking at who she is looking for. How often is Jesus right in front of us, and us without eyes to see?

Now verse 16: "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher')" (John 20:16). Actually it means "my teacher." It's personal possessive. Mine. When you don't know who you are, Jesus does. In an age of

identity experimentation, when great pressure is put on each of us to define, declare, delineate our specific core identity, our particular contribution to the world, our individual perspective and value and meaning—when we are all under pressure to figure these things out and get them out there on every platform—if you are starting to struggle with who you are, Jesus knows who you are. Who you are is found in your relationship with Jesus Christ. “Mary.” To hear him say it, from a place of anxiety, despair, darkness, she returns immediately to the joy of having Jesus as her guide, her Savior, her teacher. “Mary.” “Rabboni. My teacher.” Home again.

I want you to see something in this passage. Mary in this verse “turned toward him.” Now, I’ve spent time studying this. I’ve looked at the Greek. Mary already turned around. She turned around in verse 14. It says literally she turned toward her back, she physically turned around and saw Jesus. But now, in verse 16, Mary turned toward Him. She is facing Jesus, but she turned toward Jesus. Are you with me? There is a second turning in Mary, a second turning toward Jesus. It’s not physical. It’s not about where her body is or what she sees with her eyes. It’s a turning toward Jesus within her, within her mind, within her heart, in her very soul—she turns toward Jesus. Will you turn toward Jesus? Not toward church, not toward religion, not toward me ... toward Jesus. “Mary.” “Rabboni.” “Mary.” “My Lord. Jesus. I turn to you.”

After this turning, Mary either embraces Jesus or falls to His feet and grasps His ankles, because Jesus says, “Hey, lay off.” “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’” (John 20:17). Let go of me. The body ascends now. Huge implications. Someday I’ll need

to preach a series on this chapter, but we will get to some of this before the series is over. Huge implications for the restoration of all things and the return of beauty—the body, the human body of Jesus, ascends, moves into the eternal Kingdom of God, up there, out there, where we all will follow, where beauty is restored forever. Ascension. “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Jesus is saying, “My relationship with God is your relationship with God now. You are in me. You are adopted. I’m the Son, now you are a daughter by faith in me.” Get it? Huge implications. If Jesus came as one of us, died as one of us, rose as one of us, now goes as one of us into that place, that “up there” future, that means we get to go too.

Then Jesus sends Mary to proclaim the resurrection. He wanted her to go say it. It wasn’t necessary. The next place He went was to those same disciples. Jesus wanted her to do it. He wants us all to do it. “Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ And she told them that he had said these things to her” (John 20:18). She preached the gospel, the news: Jesus beat death and is headed to the Father. The gospel is news of an event which, when believed, changes your life. News that, when you believe it transfers your life from a kingdom of darkness and destruction into a kingdom of light, hope and eternal life. It isn’t just what Jesus did that matters, but that what Jesus did matters to you.

It is resurrection day. Empty tomb day. Easter day. Jesus is risen. Beauty is restored. Imagine you owned a priceless work of art; a Monet or a Rembrandt—or a Simpich. We had a Rembrandt sketch here in the church a few years ago for a series on the Prodigal Son. It felt like I was personally responsible for the Queen’s Jewels! Imagine you found a work of art in the attic or something, but it was all crusted over with



dirt, the paint was chipping, the canvas was ripped at places. What would you do? Toss it out? No. You would carefully, lovingly, painstakingly work to restore that thing. Have you ever seen these restorationists, one cotton swab at a time, one little scrape, one brush, patiently restoring the beauty?

That's how God feels about you. A work of art. A masterpiece. But there are problems. If I'm a work of art, made by God, made in the image of God, how can all that beauty be restored? The legalists, the high-religious moralists, they'll tell you the way to restore all that beauty is to obey the rules. Try harder. Do better. On the other hand, the relativists, the group who don't like to draw any hard lines, they say, no, just accept it. Just get used to it. Just be OK with it the way it is. Either way, you give up. You either despair of your inability to fix yourself, or you despair in the resignation that nothing can change. You give up on yourself, and then you give up on others. Look, the moralists say, "If I can't change myself and restore my beauty, well, that guy, he's worse off than I am. He'll never get better." The relativists say, "If I can't accept myself, well, there's no hope for her. She's worse off than me. She'll never find peace." Either way, you will see the painting, the soiled masterpiece, in yourself and in others, and all too easily toss it out. I can't fix myself, neither can he. I can't find peace, neither can she. Toss out the masterpiece.

The gospel is neither moralism nor relativism. The gospel is good news of what Jesus has done to enter into the masterpiece. The gospel is news that Jesus has come to be the restorer of beauty, to take the stain away so that you can begin to be restored to beauty, restored to the image of God within you. Remember, Jesus is the image of God. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's character. Jesus is the image of God. Jesus took on the stain, now Jesus walks out of the tomb and says, "In me, the risen Lord, the image of God is restored in all humanity—all who call on me in faith." The gospel is news, not of how to fix yourself with moralistic carefulness—

you can't. And not of how to accept yourself in your fallen and soiled state—you can't. The gospel is news not of how to save yourself, but that Jesus has come to restore, to seek and to save.

Mary turned toward Jesus. She realized, "It isn't a religious behavior pattern I need; it isn't inner acceptance I need. I need a Savior. I need a restorationist. It isn't about what I bring to you, Jesus, it's about what you bring, what you have done for me. I need you." "Mary." "Rabboni. Save me." How does one become a child of God? How do you become a Christian? How do you enter that kind of relationship Mary found, truly known, truly named by Jesus, and truly knowing Jesus as your Lord? It isn't simply by understanding or knowledge of what Jesus did. It isn't by doing Christian things either. People say being a Christian is about trying to behave like Jesus. Not quite. Not at the core. And certainly not at the beginning. Becoming Christian is about being saved by Jesus, captured by Jesus the **Beautiful Savior**, and giving your life, your dirtied masterpiece, over into His hands for repair, restoration and salvation. You have to give it over to Him. When I gave my life to Jesus, I was only 12. I had hardly a life to give over. It's harder when you are older, but not impossible. Give your life over to Jesus. The Gospel is news that Jesus has done it, He has done it for you—it is news which when believed has the power to save your soul.

I want to ask you to pray after me, maybe for the first time. I'll ask all in the church to follow after me line by line, and you online, you can follow along too, however you'd like.

Let's pray: Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot save myself, I cannot repair my masterpiece, I cannot accept my broken state, I want to put my life in your hands, today I am yours, thank you for giving your life for me, now I give you mine, I trust and believe in your power to save. In Jesus' name. Amen.

