



The Lenten Journey

DEVOTIONAL | WEEK 7 | APRIL 20

"We're Easter people living in a Good Friday world." – Anne Lamott

RECEIVE

Easter has arrived! After six dark weeks of Lent, life is raising up from the grave. With 2,000 years of history on our side, we expect the resurrection story but for the disciples who found the tomb empty, this would have been both stunning and unexpected. It was so unimaginable that they thought someone took the body and Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener. As you read **John 20**, take note of how you would have felt if you were there. Would you be confused? Scared? Worried? Excited? Consider what it would have been like to be.

REFLECT

1. Mary arrives at the tomb while it is still dark and finds the stone rolled away. Peter and the other disciple (historically understood to be John) run to the tomb and find only the grave cloths. Then they return home. What do you think their first thoughts were? Jesus told them He would leave and come back (John 16). Do you think this moment led them into understanding or more confusion?

2. Mary came to the tomb in the dark (20:1). Where have you encountered Jesus in the “dark” places of your own life? Why do you think the disciples left after seeing the empty tomb, while Mary stayed?
3. Mary lingers by the tomb, crying. She sees two angels but does not yet understand what is happening. Then she turns and sees Jesus but mistakes Him for the gardener—until He speaks her name. Mary does not recognize Jesus at first. What does it mean to you that Jesus calls Mary by name? How might you listen for God to speak your own name?
4. There is understandable confusion in this passage until the disciples fully take in what has happened. They had unique expectations of Jesus, which were different from what actually happened. Jesus often appears to us in unexpected places and ways. Can you recall a time when following or understanding Jesus looked different than you had planned?
5. Jesus tells Mary not to cling to Him, but to go and tell the others that He is ascending to the Father (20:17–18). Mary becomes the first witness to the resurrection. Jesus’ words remind us that faith is not about holding on but about going out and sharing. How does this challenge or encourage you in your own faith journey? How do you feel about sharing the Good News (“the Gospel”) of Jesus?
6. In John 20:19, we read that the disciples had regrouped and gathered, but they were hiding in a locked room for fear of the Jewish leaders. What were they afraid might happen to them? Why were these religious leaders angry?
7. Jesus greets them with a word of peace (20:19). Where else in the Farewell Discourse (the narratives in chapters 13–17) does Jesus speak of peace? How would a greeting of peace have resonated with them? How does the idea of peace intersect or resonate with your own life?
8. In John 20:24–31, we find a narrative about the disciple Thomas. What is his story? What do you make of Thomas? Do you resonate at all with his doubt? How does Jesus meet us in our doubts?

RESPOND

The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus indeed is risen from the dead. This is the story that Christians are called to share with others. Sometimes this is difficult to do. We might worry about what others will think of us or we know that people we care about are hostile to the Christian faith.

This week, make a short list of people you want to pray for in this season after Easter. Keep this list on your phone or put it on a post it note in a place that will help you remember to pray daily for them.

BLESSING

Risen Lord, You met Mary in the garden while the world was still dark. You spoke her name, and changed her life and ours, forever. Meet us in the dark gardens of our own lives. Speak our names, that we might recognize You. Send us out as witnesses to Your life changing love so that the world might know You and hear You call their names. Teach us to pray for Your good work and love to reshape and reclaim the dark places in our world. Teach us to live as Easter people whose light threads through the darkness to Your glory. Amen.