

Talk about 21 day fast material.

Joke: A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter. So he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block 100 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES."

When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note. "I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

Welcome to our second week of our Witness His Resurrection series. We began last week looking at Simon the Zealot, today we pick up looking at Mary Magdalene.

The story of her life is quite incredible. Mary Magdalene had her whole life rescued, restored, put back together,

and turned right-side up by Jesus.

When the Messiah crossed paths with Mary Magdalene on that unforgettable day, her shattered life was being held hostage. But Jesus came along and it set it free.

And while the Scriptures do not record the specific encounter, Mark identifies Mary Magdalene in his gospel account as the woman “from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons.” (Mark 16:9)

As a result of her encounter with the Savior, Mary Magdalene did everything within her reach to further Jesus’ ministry, message, and mission.

And wow did the Lord have an incredible plan in store for her life!

Mary Magdalene has the distinct honor of being identified as the first person to witness the resurrected Jesus on that original Easter Sunday morning.

While being such an important person in the biblical account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, little is known about this woman whose name is associated with a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee called Magdala.

She is mentioned in all four gospel writings, primarily in conjunction with the happenings of Jesus' crucifixion.

Jesus was there for Mary Magdalene when she was enveloped by demonic oppression; and so for Mary the least she could do was be there for Jesus when He was at Calvary selflessly sacrificing His life for ours.

If Mary Magdalene's presence at the cross meant Jesus would not have to suffer and die alone, then there was no other place she would rather be.

Mary stood her ground in faithful devotion and appreciation to the One who had claimed her amid her own hell on earth before Jesus delivered and set her free from those seven demons.

Before Jesus' miracle in Mary's life, she had suffered alone in her depressing demonic oppression.

And because of that, she was not about to allow Jesus to experience any such solo suffering in His final hours while on the cross.

There is something powerful about choosing to be present when someone is suffering and in pain. And Mary, she knew about being alone in those times all too well.

While emotionally gutted as she experienced the horrors with Jesus on the cross for six hours just feet from where He was being executed, she remained steadfast and near as He breathed His final breath.

She was close to Him as they removed Jesus' body from the cross and was nearby when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus quickly prepared Jesus' dead body and placed it in an unused tomb.

Mary Magdalene was present for it all before retreating to where she was staying to observe the quickly approaching Sabbath as Good Friday's sunset.

She likely sat in silent grief over the next several hours, only interrupting the heavy quiet with spontaneous sobs and sniffs accompanying the tears that kept falling around her.

How long must that Sabbath "rest" have felt without ever feeling the refreshment and relaxation for which the Sabbath day was intended?

Regardless, she endured that time too and now was ready to return to the tomb to give proper attention to Jesus by anointing and preparing His maimed and lifeless body for burial.

Little did she know that once the Sabbath day had come and gone, Mary Magdalene soon would hear her name called again from the lips of her resurrected Lord outside the empty tomb.

When death-conquering Jesus said her name, “Mary,” His voice surely brought her to her knees. It was her natural response to this One who had spoken words of rescue and redemption over her life in prior days.

Watch video www.skitguys.com.

Of the few specifics that we do know about Mary Magdalene’s life, the fact that she had a dark past is one of them.

As mentioned, we know Mary once harbored seven demons in her precious life. That much is known about her.

However, I think it is inaccurate and unsubstantiated to connect Mary’s dark past with any specific sinful actions or allusions to “loose-living,” as some have tried to do throughout church history.

Some biblical commentators have tried to link Mary Magdalene with the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-12, others with the unnamed woman labeled as “a

sinner” in Luke 7:37-38 who anointed Jesus’ feet before wiping them with her hair, not to mention scores of extra biblical mythology throughout history.

However, none of these connections to Mary Magdalene are supported with any valid evidence.

And so often the same is true in our lives. People get “extra” added on to what simply is not accurate, but it unfortunately sometimes tends to stick and become part of one’s identity and story.

So many in the Body of Christ have had the enemy whisper things to them that just isn’t truth and has caused them to understand who they are or whose they are which has caused an identity crisis in their life.

Hear this church it doesn’t matter what the enemy tells you, what others tell you, all that matters is what the Lord speaks over you.

As for Mary Magdalene I think she was able to relate to

that kind of undeserved reputation. She did mention that in the video we just saw.

However, nothing could shift her away from the power of her initial demon cleansing interaction with Jesus. At that moment, she became brand new from the inside out.

What happened to Mary Magdalene on that day is what the Apostle Paul later would write about to the church at Corinth that results when people experience new life found only in the powerful person of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV): Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

That is an incredible truth that we need to reflect on today.

The power Jesus invokes into the lives of those who are now changed by Him is the reality we must hold on to as we walk through all our tomorrows.

It is the experience of what happened to Mary Magdalene when she encountered the power of Jesus.

And the power of Jesus experienced by Mary then is the same power that a person can experience in his or her life today when that person's life becomes "hidden in Christ."

If a person is "in Christ," something life-changing has happened.

If a person has started a new relationship with Jesus Christ because a choice was made to put their faith, hope, and trust in Jesus to be that person's King, a whole new approach to life is now available. That person has a new heart with a fresh start to be enjoyed as they bow down in worship to Jesus.

Becoming a new creation by the power of Jesus means He is the Lord of your life. He is the One you live for, the One you submit to, and the One you bend your will to in every choice in your life.

If a person's identity is wrapped up in being a follower of Jesus because that person has experienced a total life change through engaging with Jesus, repenting of one's sin, and confessing Jesus as Lord, true freedom and forgiveness is now in front of that person.

When an individual believes in their heart, God raised Jesus from the dead, not only is that person saved from their sins that separated them from our Holy God, but that person is indeed a new creation.

The old "you" has gone, and the new "you" has come.

Such a "new creation" now has the opportunity to live for the King and His Kingdom, and do so, on earth as it is in heaven.

And while that truth of Scripture about being a "new creation" has all kinds of implications on what has happened on the inside, it's not like a person's outside demeanor or look has automatically changed.

Have you ever had that experience when someone you know walks into the room, and you say: Isn't there something different about you?

Now honestly, having that experience of "There's something different about you" often happens when there is a physical difference that you notice in the other person.

- Maybe the person you know got a new haircut.
- Maybe the person you know got their braces off.
- Maybe the person you know has been working out.
- Maybe the person you know shaved.

While sometimes noticing that "there's something different about you," can be an observation about someone's physical appearance, what Paul was writing about in that verse from 2 Corinthians about being a "New Creation" is an inside job that expresses itself on the outside.

Something happens inside a person when Jesus encounters a person in such a way that it changes what they do, what they say and how they say it, what they

focus their time, their energy, their resources, and their life on from that moment forward.

That's what we see exemplified in the life of Mary Magdalene.

Jesus changed what was happening on her inside, and it adjusted all her life into a brand-new creation. And others could see it on the outside.

Jesus believed in Mary Magdalene. He believed she was worth rescuing from the evil living rent-free inside her that needed to be evicted.

And Jesus believed she was the one who should be the first to encounter Him on the other side of death once He emerged from the tomb.

She witnessed His resurrection, and believed with all her heart, soul, mind and strength.

Had Jesus not believed Mary had what it took to be the first

witness of His resurrected life, He likely would not have revealed Himself to her as He did.

Once Mary encountered Jesus near the tomb, she instantly went to relay the news of her meeting with Jesus.

And she invested her life, continuing to tell others of this One who had rescued her and defeated death. People must know this life-altering story of Jesus and His power that is worth believing.

Mary Magdalene did her part to make sure everyone had the opportunity to hear and to know about Jesus.

While we know Mary Magdalene was the first to encounter Jesus at the tomb after His resurrection, it is safe to assume she also was in the room when Jesus later appeared to the disciples and those who were with them, as Luke 24 describes.

Luke 24:36–49 (NIV): While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace

be with you.” 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence. 44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Imagine the impact these corporate moments, coupled with her private one in the garden near the tomb would have had on Mary Magdalene's life.

It is reasonable to assume she was right there in the room when Jesus appeared to the group. She certainly would have been in awe of Him all over again as Jesus stood in their presence eating and talking with them about the message that must be told to everybody everywhere.

When Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," rest assured that all those in attendance were radically marked at that moment, including Mary Magdalene.

Once Jesus told her and the others that they were to be His witnesses of these things, Mary Magdalene took such commissioning to heart.

She was dialed in to being a carrier of the good news that Jesus told them all to share concerning "repentance for the forgiveness of sins [that] should be proclaimed in his name

to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

N.T. Wright's take on this task from Jesus to His followers sums up what Mary Magdalene would invest her life in all her days.

Wright notes, "'Repentance' and 'forgiveness of sins' are not, therefore, simply a matter for the individual, though they certainly are that. At the heart of being a Christian is the personal turning away from sin, and celebrating God's forgiveness, which is, after all, at the heart of the Lord's Prayer itself. But these two words go much wider as well. They are the agenda which can change the world."

Mary Magdalene's world had been changed by Jesus. She, in turn, would do everything she could to fulfill what Jesus had told her and the others to do.

She would go and tell the good news to a world that needed to be changed by His mercy and grace. She was a living example of what the power of Jesus could do to restore life and bring freedom to one who had experienced

the exact opposite for far too long.

How could she keep such good news to herself? Any
maybe the better question is: How can we?