

# Service of the Word 26 July 2020

## Pentecost 8 Feast of Mary Magdalene

---

### Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service. Today we celebrate a very special woman and one of my favourite saints, Mary Magdalene. Mary is special because she is the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. She is known in the Orthodox church as the *Apostle to the apostles* because she carried the news of the resurrection from the empty tomb to the Apostles gathered in Jerusalem on that first Easter morning. We first hear of Mary as a follower of Jesus in Luke's gospel where: *Jesus continued according to plan, traveled to town after town, village after village, preaching God's kingdom, spreading the Message. The Twelve were with him. There were also some women in their company who had been healed of various evil afflictions and illnesses: **Mary, the one called **Magdalene**, from whom seven demons had gone out;**—along with many others who used their considerable means to provide for the company.* This morning we join our voices with those of all the saints in praise and thanksgiving for all the blessings in our lives.

---

### Gathering

We are gathered together as the family of God  
to offer praise and thanksgiving  
to ask forgiveness of our sins  
to hear and receive God's holy Word  
to pray for the needs of the world  
and to seek God's grace  
that through Jesus Christ our Lord  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit  
we may give ourselves to God's service.

### Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.  
Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.

Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;  
and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.  
But we acknowledge our wickedness;  
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.  
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;  
O Lord, make haste to help us.  
May the Lord forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are  
and direct what we shall be,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Praise**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
with God the Son, Jesus Christ,  
and God the Holy Spirit,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

---

## **Collect of the Day**

Almighty God,  
whose Son restored Mary Magdalene  
to wholeness of body, mind and spirit,  
and called her to be the witness of his resurrection;  
forgive us, heal us and strengthen us by your grace,  
that we may serve you in the power of His risen life;  
who lives and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, world without end. Amen

---

## **First Reading**

### **Psalm 42**

1 As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.  
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?  
3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me all day long,  
'Where is your God?'  
4 These things I remember  
as I pour out my soul:  
how I used to go to the house of God  
under the protection of the Mighty One[d]  
with shouts of joy and praise  
among the festive throng.  
5 Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Saviour and my God.  
6 My soul is downcast within me;  
therefore I will remember you  
from the land of the Jordan,  
the heights of Hermon – from Mount Mizar.  
7 Deep calls to deep  
in the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your waves and breakers  
have swept over me.  
8 By day the Lord directs his love,  
at night his song is with me –  
a prayer to the God of my life.  
9 I say to God my Rock,  
'Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?'  
10 My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long,  
'Where is your God?'  
11 Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.

---

## Second Reading

### John 20.11-18 MSG

11-13 Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid. They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?"

13-14 "They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

15 Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?"

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

16 Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

17 Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her.

---

## Reflection

I have always been a passionate fan of Mary Magdalene which is why I am so delighted to celebrate her today. don't think you could possibly find anyone in the whole Gospel story who better illustrates what it means to *live in faith in a way that helps to shape the world for the better*. But before we talk about Mary Magdalene and the importance of her story we need to be clear about who she is **NOT**.

Mary Magdalene was **NOT**:

- Mary of BETHANY, the sister of Martha and Lazarus

- the unnamed woman, no better than she should be, who anoints Jesus' feet in Luke's gospel; as far as gospel evidence is concerned was she ever a prostitute,

### Mary Magdalene **WAS THE WOMAN WHO:**

- was healed of seven demons in Luke's gospel and became a follower of Jesus along with several other women
- she was a woman of considerable means who helped to fund and support Jesus, and the disciples,
- she was present at the foot of the cross and according to Matthew present at the burial of Jesus
- she was one of the women, known in Orthodox Christianity as the *myth bearers*, who went a sunrise on the third day to anoint the body of Jesus,
- she was in John's gospel the first witness to the resurrected Jesus and the first person to speak the words, *I have seen the Lord!* which for many makes her the first preacher in the Christian Church. For this role she is known in Orthodox Christianity by the revered title of *Apostle to the Apostles*

Mary Magdalene has suffered a very undeserved bad press in Western Christianity through out more than 2,000 years of history. Because early theologians identified her with a prostitute she has for many Christians been seen as just the shadow side of Mary, the saintly mother of Jesus, playing the harlot to Mary's madonna. This is largely because monastics in the early church who idolised celibacy found it difficult to relate to common old garden variety women of faith.

The Mary Magdalene I admire is found in an icon by Robert Lentz, a reproduction of this icon hangs in my study as I write this reflection. This is the Mary who is neither the impossible role model nor the shameless sinner. This someone like us, who may have had difficulties, who loses their way as we all do from time to time. At the heart of her story this Mary, the real one, is someone like the rest of us, who by trial and error, through sin and redemption has found the true source of her life, God in Jesus the Christ.

This is the Mary I admire, whose life fascinates me. Lentz's icon takes its inspiration from the Orthodox tradition and was commissioned in 1989 to commemorate the consecration of Barbara Harris as the first woman bishop

in the Anglican communion. This icon which hangs in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, is small but as icons often are very powerful. I have seen it in person so to speak and it is, in the way of icons, a powerful image. This Mary Magdalene, dark skinned, wrapped in a rich red cloak a symbol of her wealthy status, holding an egg is Mary at her best, as *Apostle to the Apostles*. A woman whose faith significantly shaped the future of the Christian Church and the world in which she lived.

Mary's story in tradition is that she was present at Pentecost and afterwards set out to preach the gospel to ends of the earth. This daring woman went far beyond her native land to the heart of pagan Rome. She took the proclamation of the gospel to Emperor Tiberias himself. *Legend has it that she took an egg, ancient symbol of new life to illustrate her message. the Emperor responded that no could be raised from the dead anymore than the egg in her hand could turn red. Miraculously, the egg turned red in testimony to her word.* Hence the reason we colour eggs at Easter.

The Lentz icon was inspired by someone who had an *almost encounter* with Mary Magdalene. Katherine Lehman who headed to project which commissioned the icon tells this story.

*In 1989 I went on a tour of the Holy Land. We were whizzing along the Sea of Galilee, when our tour guide gestured casually out of the window to heap of rock which were marked as an archaeological site. He said we were passing the ruins of Migdal, also known as Magdala. A person from Magdala is a Magdalene, just as a person from Nazareth is a Nazarene. We were speeding **past** the village of Mary Magdalene. We asked to stop but the site was not considered to be of any interest. I have regretted to this day that I could not, even for a moment, have stood at the village of Mary of Magdala.*

So today we celebrate the special and unique voice of one woman of faith who went out to tell others of the good news of Jesus Christ - going in faith to shape the future.

---

**Apostle's Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by  
the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Let us pray, for the church and the world, thanking God for the blessings in  
our lives*

---

## **Intercessions**

---

## **Blessing**

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive  
those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen

## **Act of Dedication**

Almighty God,  
we thank you for the gift of your holy word:

may it be a lantern to our feet,  
a light upon our paths,  
and a strength to our lives.  
Take us and use us to love and serve all people  
in the power of the Holy Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **Praise**

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.  
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.  
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his  
works.  
You renew the face of the earth.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \* you renew the face of the earth.

## **Blessing**

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and  
minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our  
Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy  
Spirit, Be with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and  
evermore. Amen