

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

09 April 2023

The Sound of a Familiar Voice

“ Jesus 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. Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ Which means Teacher”. *John 20.*

Have you had the experience of a dog who knows you more by your voice than by your looks? There are several actors that I have to hear their voice before I am sure who they are. For years people could not tell the difference between my brother’s voice and mine. I never heard Jesus’ voice.

Thoughts were not transmitted by sound between him and I.

Oh, my, I hope we have voices in heaven.

Kathy’s voice was always comforting to me.

At night as we went to sleep if she was telling me things I had a hard time staying awake.

When traveling without her I liked to call her at night and as she spoke I settled down and relaxed.

Voices can have a strong impact on us.

When you see Jesus do not worry about his voice, focus on his eyes.

They will draw you in.

What voice in your life calmed you?

How about your mother’s voice?

I had an aunt whose voice would wake you up.

You knew it was her even across the room.

When it comes to Jesus I expect it was the tone of his voice and the assurance of his voice that demanded your attention.

He spoke with authority.

He was Truth.

There are voices in your life that are attached to meaningful experiences.

When the dogs woke me up and I looked down the street and saw a large ball of fire in the sky I yelled and the whole house was outside in an instant.

My voice conveyed the urgency of the moment.

The sound of a familiar voice is powerful medicine.

What did Mary experience when she recognized the voice of Jesus in the garden?

She knew it was her Lord and Master speaking.

He was alive!

Just as he said, but no one could believe it for no one had returned from the dead.

We assume that this is the Mary from whom Jesus had removed seven demons.

Jesus had given her new life.

She had been relieved of her torment and suffering.

It is assumed that she was a prostitute.

That would have made her an outcast.

She came from a sin filled town and she had several demons, she had to be a very bad person.

People knew who she was and how bad she was.

She was a person to avoid.

Then she met Jesus.

She had a face to face encounter with him.

Encounters with Jesus change things.
Face to face encounters change everything.
We do not have the record of the actual event.
Did she cry out to him or cower in front of him?
The demons in her knew Jesus instantly.
The actual event is not as important as the result.
She was delivered and redeemed.
She had been made whole by the words, "Be whole!"
What part of our life needs delivered?
A habit that we fight with or fear of the future, the might be that keeps us awake at night.
What Spirits haunt us?
One anonymous poet put it this way.
"Oh, I wish there were some wonderful place called the Land of Beginning Again. Where all our sins and mistakes could be laid aside like a shabby old coat and never be put on again!"
There is a move that captures this idea and calls it a "Do over".
Sometimes we need what we call a second chance.
A "do over" an opportunity to make things right or do it right.
Jesus is the redeemer, he is the second chance to be right.
He changes lives as he changed the life of Mary Magdalene.
Today we celebrate the fact that Jesus did not stay in the grave but arose as our advocate of redemption.
It is significant that Mary was the first person to see the risen Lord.
She had one of the more dramatic conversion experiences.
God is telling us something about resurrection and conversion.
Without Christ's resurrection, there can be no conversion.
Paul wrote to the Philippians of his desire "To know Christ, yes, to know the power of the resurrection."
The resurrection power is what changes people.
A dead Christ can change no one.
Paul told the Corinthians, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."
The power of sin nailed him to the cross; the power of God raised him.
That same power continues to work, and if you will repent of sin and trust Jesus, his power will change you today.
Mary had become a part of the followers of Jesus after her deliverance.
She was one of the "others" who traveled with Jesus and the disciples.
These people, "were helping to support them out of their own means." *Luke 8*
We do not know the particulars that Mary did but she was devoted to what Jesus was doing.
Conversion is intended to result in committed service.
"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do". *Eph. 2*
Surely Jesus appreciated Mary's good works.
If the Lord noticed the copper coin of the widow and offered praise for her faithfulness, he notices what we do.
He appreciates our ministry, whether great or small.
Our Lord appreciates every labor, and in eternity all who serve will hear his words of appreciation, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness." *Matt. 25*
Jesus told Mary to go tell.
He commissions us to do the same.
We should be telling others about what God has done for us in and through Jesus "The Christ".
When Jesus spoke her name, Mary realized who he was and embraced him in adoration.
But Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me."
It was not a time of worship.
The resurrection is not a doctrine to hold on to selfishly but an experience to share selflessly.

We are not to hold on to it but give it away.

Mary Magdalene obviously understood, because she “went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’”

A newspaper had this interesting editorial about Easter “Easter is usually a quiet occasion. Millions of Americans make a special effort to go to church on Easter Sunday. Easter is a wholesome kind of holiday. It gives us an opportunity to recuperate in a small measure from the harassments of daily life.”

That is not what the Lord intended.

The resurrection is the impetus to enter the harassments of life and change the world.

It is ironic that for Christians, Easter events take place inside the church building.

We dress up and go to church where we enjoy our programs and flowers and decorations.

Jesus said the big event should be outside the church, go tell!

Mary’s commission illustrates the Lord’s desire to use every disciple to share the resurrection news.

The Lord’s appearance to Mary, a woman with a scandalous past, sent a shock wave throughout the disciple band.

The eleven disciples probably thought that Jesus should have appeared to them first.

Isn’t that just like Jesus to use the person others consider unlikely?

The ingredient that makes the difference is love.

He will use any of us to tell the good news.

Jesus still speaks.

His voice can be heard today.

Are you listening?

He says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.”

Is your door open to Jesus?