

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

27 September 2026

Speaking with Mary Magdalene

Text: "Woman, he said, 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: 15* from *John 20:11-18*.

When is the last time you cried?

We are told that tears can be a sign of emotional health.

Expressing emotion instead of keeping it all bottled up inside can be one of the most health-giving things we can do.

But we are also told that tears can be a sign of emotional sickness.

Uncontrollable weeping or even sentimental weeping may be a sign of guilt or an evidence of unresolved grief.

Tears can also be a defense mechanism or an escape from reality or a substitute for positive action.

Like anything else tears can be positive or negative.

Depending on the situation or the person.

The Bible is surely no stranger to crying.

It gives innumerable accounts of people who shed tears for all kinds of reasons.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and *Hebrews 5:7* says that in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.

Paul said to the Ephesian elders that for three years in Paul's ministry with them he ceased not to warn them with tears.

There is one entire book in the Bible that sounds like one great sob, the book of Lamentations.

The conversation of Jesus with Mary Magdalene had to do with tears.

The first recorded words of Jesus after his resurrection were, "Woman, why are you crying?"

Her tears were a strange mixture of unbelief and love, affection and fear.

And in response to her weeping, Jesus appeared and spoke words that are a strange combination of comfort and rebuke.

We are so much like Mary and our tears, whether they are shed with the eyes or only in the heart, are so much like her tears.

Hers were tears of sorrow, and Jesus spoke to her words of comfort.

It is not difficult for those who have suffered the death of a close loved one or friend to understand Mary's grief.

She was brokenhearted, crushed, overcome with sorrow.

Not only was Jesus dead, but now his body was missing.

No piece in the puzzle fit.

There was no rhyme or reason in her pain.

So she wept.

If you have known the chilling hand of death to touch someone you love, you too have wept tears of sorrow.

If you have know the loneliness of separation, you too have wept the tears of sorrow; but if you listen, Jesus will say to you what he said to this grieving woman.

After he asked her, Why are you crying? She supposed he was the gardener and answered, Sir if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.

To those pleading, pitiful expressions, Jesus spoke only one word, her name, Mary.

In the time of sorrow what a person needs more than anything else is the comfort of God's presence and love.

When we weep tears of sorrow, we need to hear the voice of Jesus speak our name.

If we are still and listen, we will hear it.

Maybe not an audible voice, but in the quiet of the soul the risen Christ will come to comfort and console us.

For the Christian the time of sorrow is a bittersweet time in life.

It is bitter because of the pain of loss and the suffering of separation.

But it is also sweet in the experience of the nearness of God and the reality and the power of God.

Mary wept tears of love and Jesus spoke to her words of assurance.

Mary loved Jesus.

Her tears were a sign of that love and evidence of her devotion.

In response to that love and devotion, Jesus appeared to reassure her that her love was received.

By speaking to her personally, he was saying, I know of your devotion.

I receive your love.

By speaking to her personally, Jesus was assuring her of his love for her.

All of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus were only to people who loved him, except one.

After his resurrection Jesus did not appear to Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, or the Roman soldiers.

Why is that?

Why did he not dazzle them or overwhelm them by showing that he was alive and that he was real?

He knew that such appearances would not accomplish any real purpose.

He knew that such appearances would at best frighten them and at worst solidify their resistance even more.

The post resurrection appearances of Jesus were to those who loved him, whose hearts were already turned to him.

The same is true today.

Jesus is real only to those who love him and will commit their lives to him.

In *John 14:21* we read, He that has my commandments, and keep them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.

Jesus Christ will manifest himself only to those who love him.

Do you know how one comes to know God?

It is not by analytical thought or logical reasoning.

You may come to know a lot about God that way, but you do not come to know him that way.

God becomes real in a person's life through the instrumentality of the heart; as one is willing to trust God, make a commitment to him, and obey him.

God will manifest himself and make himself real.

Jesus Christ gives assurance of his presence and love only to the devoted heart.

Mary's tears were expressions of love and devotion.

So Jesus made himself real to her and appeared to her.

Mary wept tears of unbelief, and Jesus appeared to her to challenge her.

Mary's tears showed great love but little faith.

Her grief blinded her to the facts, the empty tomb, the way in which the linens lay, the presence of the angels.

All of these should have reminded her of Jesus' own words that he would rise again on the third day.

Even Jesus' voice did not penetrate her grief.

She was oblivious to everything except her own feelings.

So Jesus' question, why are you crying? Was asked to open Mary's eyes and quicken her faith.

There is even a hint of rebuke in the question.

It is as if Jesus was saying, Mary your weeping is unnecessary.

Remember what I promised you?

Believe in me.

I am alive just as I said I would be.

We are so like Mary.

How many times do we weep for something that is already in our grasp?

How many times do we weep for fear of what will never actually happen?

How many times do we weep for some, unnecessary thing?

Jesus challenges us just as he challenged Mary.

Put away your tears of anxiety, fear, and unbelief.

Trust in my power, love and providence, I am here for you.

This is the promise of Jesus to all who believe in him and Lord and Savior.

If you are weeping today Jesus asks you, "Why are you crying?"

Your tears may be shed or unshed; he knows your sorrow.

If you are weeping in defeat and discouragement over the apparent weakness of the kingdom of God, Jesus says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves."

If you are weeping in concern for lost souls, Jesus says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

If you are weeping in sorrow or sadness, Jesus says to you, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and you shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

If you are weeping over the spiritual need in your life and the leanness of your own soul, Jesus says to you, "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

What you need Jesus has ready for you!