

Why Weepest Thou?

Sermon by the Editor

YOU will find the text for this Easter message in the 20th chapter of the gospel according to St. John. A clause in the 15th verse reads: "Woman, why weepest thou?" and from these words we wish to draw the lesson for tonight. You will notice in the beginning of the narrative, that it was yet dark when Mary came to the sepulchre. The sun had not arisen on that first great Easter morning, and the shades of night were hanging over the countryside, when she came to anoint the body of her Lord. But dark as was the night, it was darker still, in the soul of Mary. She had followed Jesus Christ as he went about doing good, and her heart had rejoiced as she had watched Him heal the sick, forgive sins, and bring comfort and encouragement to all that were oppressed. Undoubtedly her voice had been shouting "Hosanna," and from the depths of her innermost being she had poured out her love and gratitude to the Lord. Then there came the crash that brought dismay and heartbreak to all who had followed Him in the way. Jesus had been taken prisoner and with lightning like rapidity the events of the past few days had followed each other. She was undoubtedly there when He dragged his cross down the way of weeping and her heart had bled as she had seen them nail Jesus to the cruel tree. It all seemed so inhuman, so cruel, and so vindictive and Mary had undoubtedly given up hope, together with the other followers of the Lord, when He hung His head and died. But death could not eradicate the love she had for Jesus. And separation from her Lord only made her heart hunger the more. That is why she arose in the darkness of the night and made her way to the tomb, where she knew the body of the Lord had been placed.

The sun was slowly rising in the Eastern sky on that first Easter morning when Mary stood at the gate of the sepulchre. Her Rowing tears were just the expression of the feeling of her heart, as she found the stone rolled away and the empty tomb. She had not as yet seen the angelic messengers; she did not yet comprehend the significance of the truth that there is always an angel in every sepulchre. If the way has been dark for you my brother, and the blackness of night has come over your soul, my sister, perhaps there is an angel in the tomb that you have never yet seen, and perhaps you are going to rejoice at the sound of a voice you love. Mary was weeping because she had not seen the angel and she was crying because she did not understand the significance of the empty grave. Every trial we have in life, every perplexity that is thrust upon you, every heartache and sorrow has hidden within it a messenger of God. Nothing in the Christian life happens by chance, for do we not read "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord"? Mary could not see through the

grave to the resurrection. She could not see the coming day, because of the blackness of the present night. But Jesus could, and that is why he said to the disciples "Let not your hearts be troubled." It is part of God's providence that we cannot see the end from the beginning. But God can, and if we are in His care and if all our trust in Him is stayed, then we should rest upon the integrity of the promises and believe Him for the end.

It is recorded by the prophet of old "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and lifted up." It may take the death of some Uzziah to show us the Lord. It may take some great sorrow to reveal the presence of God. It may take a sepulchre to show us the angel. There surely could have been no resurrection had there been no grave. I want you to notice also, that Mary stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. She might have gone away with her heart still bleeding had she not stooped and experienced the first of a series of events that were to bring her gladness, and joy unspeakable. So many men stiffen themselves in their grief, and refuse to bend, or to stoop to see what is really in the grave of their sorrow. But the man who is willing to bend, the woman who is willing to look into the thing, will invariably find the messengers of God. You do not find Jesus only in the portals of a stately cathedral. You do not only discover Him within the hallowed confines of the church; but in the busy marts of human industry, in the teeming centers of population, yea, wherever there are heart throbs you will find the Christ. By the bed of sorrow and in the lives of pain—in the place of vice and in the homes of sin, you will find the matchless Man of Galilee, a suppliant at the door of the heart.

The question of the angels was "Woman why weepest thou"? She was weeping because she did not know what the angels knew. The open sepulchre, the empty tomb, were not proof enough to Mary, only the Man with the nail prints in His hands and the spear wound in His side, could bring proof to her. She was weeping because that one was absent; she was crying because Jesus had been taken away. Have you ever stopped to consider what love this woman must have had for her blessed Lord, when she wanted to anoint the body of a dead Christ; have you ever stopped to think what feelings must have surged through her soul, as she came with her ointment through the darkness of the night? Then to find him gone! That was more than she could stand; that was more than her poor heart could contain. So she wept.

It is enough to make anybody weep when they take away Jesus. Conditions are reversed in the days in which we live. In that day Mary came to anoint the body of a dead Saviour and found that He was alive, but in the day in which we live, we oft times come to worship at the shrine of a living Christ only to find that He is dead! What do I mean? The courtroom of Pontius Pilate is not the only courtroom where Jesus Christ has been placed on trial. The cross on Golgotha is not the only cross on which he has been nailed. The tomb of Joseph is not the only tomb where his body has been placed. In these days of rationalistic interpretation of scripture we discover that Jesus has again been placed on trial. They have torn from Him the robe of his

deity and they have tied Him to the whipping post of their incredulity, and unbelief, and scourged Him again with the lashes of their word. They have robbed Him of the miraculous and supernatural, and have crucified Him afresh upon a cross of criticism. A modern inscription been placed above His head. "Philosopher, teacher, psychic" but not the Saviour of our world, vicariously suffering and substitutionally dying for our lost humanity! Then they have taken Him down and placed Him in the tomb. The day of miracles is past. Healing is no more. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are lost and Jesus Christ is **NOT "the same yesterday, today and forever."** Outside the tomb they have rolled the stone and sealed it with scientific approval and put forty modern ecclesiastics to guard it! Shame on our incredulity! Shame on our unbelief! When the Son of Man cometh will He find faith on the earth? If that is your Christ brother, if that is your Saviour sister, the one of the long, long ago, I don't blame you for standing outside such a grave and weeping.

But Mary turns away, tears still coursing down her cheeks and her heart still breaking for Jesus was not revealed. By her side was standing a Man whom she supposed was the gardener. She saw Him but she knew Him not! How many times that is true, in human experience! It is not until He speaks that we know Him. We have the letter, we have the form and the ceremony, but it is the Spirit that maketh alive. We have the word but we do not understand it until the Holy Spirit illumines. We need to speak to Jesus, and have Jesus speak to us, before we shall ever know the Glory of the risen Lord. Well might one of old cry in heart appeal, "Oh, that I might know **HIM** and the power of His resurrection!" The only way you will ever know Him, the power of his resurrection is by coming to HIM and you will never, never be able to comprehend the great truth of immortality and resurrection glory until He has spoken to you and you have spoken to Him. Can I say that nobody ever denies the deity of our Lord who knows Him as his Saviour! The voice that is sweet as bells at evening pealing, speaks to our souls and every bit of unbelief and doubt vanishes under the majesty of that tone.

Picture for a moment the broken hearted woman walking away from the sepulchre, walking away from the angels, and walking away from the Man she supposed to be the gardener. Abandoned hope; blighted ambition; lost aspirations. This was the condition of Mary! I have often wondered if the angels on the inside were smiling as they looked at the Man on the outside from whom Mary had turned away. I can see Jesus standing there, gazing at the retreating figure. Suddenly His voice rings out! He has spoken before, but there was something in the tone now, something in the ring of the voice, something in the appeal of His word that vibrates through Mary's heart. He said just one word, "Mary!" The scripture says that Mary "turned herself" and called him "Master." What floods of joy now surged through her soul! What billows of glory burst over her heart. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, the darkness of night was turned to the brightness of day. The funeral dirge was turned to the laughter of the wedding bells. Just at that one word, "Mary". It seemed

to her that all the happiness that the universe contained was crowded into one great big love gift, when she heard His voice. How happy, how sublimely happy, was this woman who had been saved from sin. **Why Weepest Thou?** No need to weep on the resurrection side of Calvary. No need (or tears my sister, when the Son of God has risen. No need for heartache when Jesus is standing by the stone that is rolled away. Is it not significant that we too will turn and call His Master, when he calls us by name? Is it not wonderful to hear His blessed voice sounding through the corridors of your soul? Is it not beyond all human understanding that in the grave there can be an angel, and the risen Lord outside to point the way to immortality?

“Woman why weepest thou; whom seekest thou?” What a question to ask a woman who seeks in tears for the Lord that she loves! The Master knew the answer before she gave it; He knew the intents of her soul before she cried “Rabboni! **Whom seekest thou?**” Lots of people take Him for the gardener, even in the day in which we live. There is a sense in which you find Him just as you seek Him. Some people look thru His word to find “Christ, Scientist” and that is all they find. Some focus their mental activities on the sacred page in search of the social ethics of His teaching and I have heard Him called “The Master socialist.” Some profess to unearth from His word the proof that He was an exponent of re-incarnation and to others He is the Great Philosopher. Multitudes worship His creation instead of bowing at the shrine of the Creator; they say the babbling brooks and swaying trees, the towering hill and the majesty of the skies furnish all the God they need. Is the clay greater than the Potter?

WHOM SEEKEST THOU my brother? For whom are ye in quest tonight, O man in tears and sorrow? The soul that seeks Him AS A SAVIOUR finds Him AS A SAVIOUR. Always! Always! Always!

Praise the name of the Lord forever; when He knows we are looking for Him, He will call us by our names. You who have never heard Him except in the whistling of the wind through the forests or in the singing of the birds in the treetops, you will find that when you look with all your heart for HIM, He will answer you and call you by your name.

“He SPEAKS! And the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing.” You who have always known Him as the great Gardener of the universe will know Him as your friend, your Saviour, your Redeemer your only way to heaven. Oh, how I wish I could burn it into every one of your souls; how I wish that I could stamp it indelibly on the pages of your memory; YOU NEED HIM; without Christ you are lost and with Christ you are saved. You MUST be born again.

WHY WEEPEST THOU? Dry your tears my friend; do you not realize that the Easter means He conquered death? Can you not hear His voice sounding through the long corridors of the centuries saying, “I am the resurrection and the life?” He is not merely the exponent of a resurrection teaching and the revealer of the ways of life; HE IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE! He that hath the Son, hath life. Jesus and salvation are inseparable. There is no eternal life in heaven. There is no

salvation. There is no peace, and no pardon, outside Jesus. Are you seeking for SOMETHING, or are you seeking for HIM?

So in conclusion let me ask you once again: “**Why weepest Thou? Whom seekest thou?**” You are looking for someone to ease the pain in your heart! Turn about sister—there stands Jesus. You are looking for the entrance to heaven, my brother. Do you not see Him--the Door, the Way of Life? You say you seek the healing of the body and the alleviation of your pain? Listen! He speaks—Jesus Christ, the SAME, yesterday—today and forever. Whatever your need, my God will supply them all! All! All!! All!!! He will supply them from the storehouse of His inexhaustible riches THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.

So Easter to me means something more than a bank holiday. It means something more than a time for us to feel the call of the open places; something more than an annual fashion parade to the house of God. Easter means that God hath raised Him up: That my elder brother rose in triumph from the tomb; that He with whom I am a joint heir broke the chains of death and came forth victorious from the grave. It means that because He lives I shall live also: it means that the tombstone o’er the grave of my mother will snap some day and she will rise to meet Him in the air. It means that the grave has lost its victory and death has been robbed of its sting, and that I, poor unworthy me, will pass from mortality into immortality and live with Him in the land where God wipes the tear from every eye.

Hallelujah! So I am not weeping any more. No! The tears are wiped away except that they be tears of joy. I am happy; I am glad; glad that he called me by my name, glad that the Man who rose in triumph o’er the tomb is MY ELDER BROTHER.