

## Four Elements of Transformation Time part 2

By Edgar F. Solís

Intro. During this past week I had the opportunity to speak with an old friend of mine. During our conversation he brought up good memories and even sang one our favorite worship songs. It seemed to me that he longed to live in those past glorious years of our youth, like he never left them, as if they were the best years of his life. Yes, he was excited about the past. You probably know people like him, people who actually live in the past. They are like “Time travelers.” I actually believe that if there was a time machine, they would buy it!

Bible Narrative.

In today’s Bible passage, we see a recurring theme. In the resurrection appearance stories, early Christian communities struggled to perceive and believe. For starters, the risen Jesus isn’t recognized at first. But the conversation and interaction between the risen Christ and Mary Magdalene is fascinating. Jesus has just risen from the dead and the first person he sees is Mary Magdalene. He says something intriguing: “Don’t hold on to me” what does that mean, “Don’t hold onto me?” The first thing Jesus does after being resurrected is tell someone not to hold on to him??? And who was this person, Mary Magdalene? She was part of the intimate circle of Jesus. She traveled with him, supported him and probably paid his bills! The Bible even mentions Mary Magdalene, “*from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons.*” In one of his video Bible studies Pastor Rob Bell presented a series of reflections on this Bible narrative. He said that this woman has a history with Jesus, she was drastically transformed, she owes him everything. Imagine spending a lot of time with someone and then watching him be killed on an execution stake. Imagine her coming to the tomb and finding out it’s empty and then going to look for the body.

She finds Jesus but thinks he's the local gardener, but NO! He is alive and back !! and she goes to embrace him but he says; "Mary don't hold on to me." Wait ...this is Jesus, the divine embodiment of love and compassion? When Mary realizes it is him and goes to hug him, he says "Don't". Are we missing something here? Mary assumes that he is back, right? He's back and he's alive and so things are going to go back to how they always were, back to the good old days. Back to the time when they would all eat together as a group, and travel and tell stories and laugh, but Jesus hasn't returned to make things how they were. Things have change and many things aren't going to be the way they were before.

### Personal Sharing

I love my kids and I miss them a lot. In my heart and mind live many, many wonderful memories of them as children (when they born, their first words, their first steps, their successes and failures...etc.). Sometimes it's just hard to understand that my two boys are now adults that can make their own decisions and experience the consequences of those decisions. Sometimes it is difficult and challenging to see that my daughter isn't a little girl any more, that she is turning into a woman right before my eyes. For a dad that isn't easy. Yes, the reality is that life sometimes is painful because life isn't static, is it? It ebbs and flows, people grow up and move away and graduate and lose their jobs, and die. People get married and others don't. Some experience divorce, others get sick with cancer, or COVID. In other words, things aren't how they used to be.

### Methodism

In the eighteenth century the church in England experienced a powerful transformation, a small group of people initiated one of the greatest awakenings in Christian history. They took that experience to those who were looking for a new way to live the Christian life. John and Charles

Wesley and others participated in a tremendous change in the way in which they lived their Christian lives. With that, the Methodist movement was begun, not as another church, but as a powerful movement. They understood their impact not only in the established church but actually in their nation. This movement transformed England from a nation close to collapse and violent revolution to a renewed society that saved thousands from alcoholism and the country from social decay.

The movement experienced success and grew and when John Wesley died, it became a new denomination whose members were called Methodists. It spread throughout the world and here we are today.

Our church was at one time the largest Methodist church in Iowa. We have a glorious past. We still hear fascinating stories of Dr. Bacon who was the minister when the church had thousands of members and was an important voice in the city and had a great deal of influence. The church had a lot people and a lot of money. But as time went on many things changed.

Coming back to the Bible Story

In our gospel reading today, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene and his disciples that it's time for them to spread the message. To take his message to the ends of the earth! Is a whole new day, everything has changed! He essentially says that they are going to receive a New Spirit, a Spirit for today. They are going to have everything they need for their new life. The old days of Jesus' physical presence were gone...and something new was about to happen...

Pastor Bell says each of us probably knows a couple who thinks that their best years are gone, or an athlete who was number one...20 years ago...but now can barely walk. You probably know people who talk about the past with great passion. I wonder if they believe that their best years are behind them.

Yes, many times we have this impulse to long for how it used to be, we can even witness that some political figures want us to long for the past, that's their motif, their campaign slogan! We could experience this sense of looking back when we were starting out, back when it was the first time, back when everything was new and better. But is not...everything isn't new. We aren't who we were... and things aren't how they used to be. How much energy do people spend wishing things were how they used to be? As pastor at this time I do believe that one of the most crucial challenges we are experiencing in our church is that we must learn to live in the Kairos of God, the time of God, today not the past.

Application. In his Bible Study Rob Bell invites us to do this:

When thinking of the past, remember, celebrate, grieve, apologize, make amends or whatever you need to do to make peace with the past. Do it then move on. There is a certain kind of despair that sets in when we believe that things were better back then; when we're stuck back there, when we're not fully present. When we are still holding on to how things were, our arms aren't free to embrace today. We cannot freeze time to hold on to the wanted reality of the past. Remember what Jesus told Mary Magdalene "Don't hold on to me."

*Because Jesus had not yet ascended to the Father, Mary must not interrupt the events of the hour by trying to hold onto Jesus. Let's be so fully present here and now so that today we don't miss a thing. Christian author Paul Nixon says that *If you were born before 1975, so much of the world that you first knew is shifting on this seismic season that has been underway for most of our lives. It is a moment of history that American author, speaker, and organizational consultant William Bridges would surely classify as liminal space, a transitional era: a day in between. Any time we have a transition between organizational leaders, between college and first job, between a positive pregnancy test and the birth of the child, between a diagnosis and death—we may**

*experience liminal time. During this season of in-between, significant old ways and assumptions may fade long before the new things to come are fully apparent —leaving us caught in the middle. We find ourselves simultaneously grieving a world that is gone with the wind and seeking to adjust to that which is dawning.”*

We all need to address with urgency, with honesty and clarity, with dignity and courage whatever is affecting the declining process we are now experiencing in this nation, in our cities, in our churches.

*Is Jesus telling you right now to let go and receive a new spirit; to let go of anything, anybody or anytime? To what new and exciting adventures of faith is the Lord calling our Church? If so, may we accept the past for what it was, may we celebrate what needs to be celebrated and grieve what needs to be grieved and then may we receive from God a new spirit, one for here, now, today!*