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Why Do We Come?

By Edgar F. Solís

Experiencing Easter from this side of the story and in this time is a great opportunity to celebrate.

I mean we all know why we came to church today, don't we? Jesus is alive! What a joy and what a blessing! Jesus' resurrection was a transformative experience for the first believers, and I am sure that for many of us, Easter is more than a date on our religious calendar, it is part of our life and a powerful reality in which we live out our faith. Easter positively affects the way in which we make decisions, interact with others and express our hope for a better world.

Bible Narrative

The narrative in John is fascinating. We will get into more details later but when I read the passage in John, the narrative came alive in my heart and mind. I wondered, why did Mary Magdalene go to the tomb? You might think it was "To bring spices to anoint Jesus' corpse but (Slide 1) John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had already wrapped the body in linen, and covered Jesus' body with myrrh and aloes and when Mary Magdalene arrives alone before dawn, she has no spices with her. (John 19:38-42). **Why does she come?** One Bible Commentary asks: *Is it sheer grief, a longing to be close to Jesus, even in death? Or is she concerned that Jesus' body, already disgraced in mockery, torture, and crucifixion, will be degraded even further — even stolen?*

Does she have a morbid curiosity to see Jesus' corpse? Christian author Mathew Mayer comments that; *Peter sees the scene of the empty tomb and apparently doesn't know what to think; "the other disciple"(John) sees "and believes "and the two men return to their homes (John 20:8-9). Only Mary stays behind. She's weeping, so she seems to have drawn the conclusion that, as she puts it to the two angels, "They have taken away my Lord" — perhaps revealing the fear that brought her to the tomb in the first place (John 20:13).*

Why did she come to the tomb? Let's remember who Mary was and what relationship she had with Jesus. You might know that she was part of Jesus' intimate circle. She traveled with him, supported him and probably paid Jesus' bills! The Bible even mentions that Jesus had cast out seven demons from her. In his video Bible study, Pastor Rob Bell presents a series of reflections on this Bible narrative. (Slide 2) 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 killed on an execution stake. Imagine her coming to the tomb and finding it empty. She goes looking for the body and finds nothing. There is no corpse because He is alive!

Theological reflection

I want to believe then that more than grief, longing, or morbid curiosity, there was something else in Mary, something that came from her heart and called her to go to the tomb. I believe that Mary's expectations and actions were based on a very human and spiritual need, the need for hope amid sorrow and anxiety. Yes! *She is holding out hope-against-hope that what he said in his last public teaching ("when I am lifted up*

from the earth", John 12:32) somehow means that death is not this story's final chapter! In other words, the resurrection, astounding as it is, isn't an end. It's a new beginning. She believed in Jesus' words; Mary was looking for another new beginning!

Experiencing the Gospel

Yes indeed, my brothers and sisters, we all are here because we believe that despite our broken humanity, despite the direction our world seems to be headed, despite the fact that many are now abandoning their faith or putting their hopes in futile ideologies, the Lord Jesus Christ is alive, and he is giving us new hope for today and the future! As Mary went to the tomb with all her hopes, longing for Jesus, we also come today eager for God's presence. We want to experience the hope we can find in Jesus, the only one who can transform our lives for God's glory!

Takeaways

Today is the day to follow the example Mary Magdalene: She said, "I have seen the Lord" (John 20:18). As a follower of Christ, we must consider her the first Apostle, staying with Jesus on the cross, coming to the tomb before dawn, and in the end, declaring the good news. Today is a day of celebration, but it is also a day of hope! Many have predicted that the church in the world would not survive the Covid 19 crisis, that many faith communities would die, but here we are, a faithful remnant raising our voices to declare that Jesus is alive! We will get our strength through the power of the resurrection of our Lord! (Slide 3) Mary went to the tomb to find Jesus, her Lord and Savior. We too, sometimes experience loss and pain but dear church, when sorrow and despair come to our lives, let's come to find Jesus. For you who despair that evil powers

seem to have the upper hand — Hope in Jesus! Easter reminds us that Jesus is victorious over the powers of death. If you feel isolated and lonely — Jesus knows your name. If you are worried that your guilt is too great for God to forgive —Come and find Jesus, your hope! Easter means God has cleared all accounts, liberated humanity from shame, reconciled us to God and each other as God's children. (Slide 4) If you are experiencing despair amid pain or anguish — take heart and find Jesus; you are not alone. If you are in despair over a world filled with hate and violence— be encouraged. Easter means one day God will overcome violence once and for all. Today, let's all celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, and the resurrection of a new church, full of love and the transformative power of Jesus for the world Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!