

"A WORD OF HOPE"

John 20:1-18

Words are powerful. They can build up or tear down. In Proverbs 25:11, the Bible states...

Proverbs 25:11... *Like* apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances.

During the Good Friday service I preached a message entitled, "Last Words of the Crucified Christ." These were the words Jesus spoke from the cross just before He died. However, these were *NOT* His final words.

This morning I'm launching a new series of sermons entitled, "First Words of the Resurrected Christ." The importance of these statements is off the charts, and they are super relevant for all of us. First words can be just as powerful as last words. Consider for instance the first words...

- **of your children**
- **of the Bible (Gen. 1:1)**
- **of the constitution—"We the People"**
- **of Moby Dick—"Call me Ishmael"**

Take for instance the very first words Jesus spoke after He was raised from the dead. It was "A Word of Hope." Who doesn't need genuine hope? I'll guarantee you the disciples of our Lord needed hope.

Friday had come and gone. If the disciples of our Lord had been interviewed, I'm sure they would have said it was the worst day of their lives. They were taunted by lingering memories of...

- **the agony of Gethsemane**
- **the arrest of Jesus**
- **the unjust trials**
- **the crowd crying out for His crucifixion**
- **the brutal scourging**
- **the six long hours Jesus hung on the cross**

The disciples huddled together in the upper room. Fear and discouragement made Friday night and Saturday miserable to say the least. Their hopes and dreams were crushed. Jesus was dead. What would they do? Where would they go? Fast forward to Sunday morning...

John 20:1... Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.

The Sabbath was over. It was early on Sunday morning. Some women came to the tomb of Jesus to complete the burial process. John, who wrote this gospel, chose to focus on Mary Magdalene.

Luke's gospel tells us that at one time she was a troubled and tortured young lady. In fact, Jesus cast 7 demons out of her. She was radically changed. From that point forward, she devoted her life to Jesus. She was there at the cross till the bitter end. Now, she is at the tomb early on Sunday morning.

John 20:2... So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Mary jumped to the wrong conclusion. She assumed that a grave robber had tampered with the tomb and had taken the body of her Lord. So, she ran to Peter and John and informed them of this apparent tragedy.

None of these disciples expected Jesus to be raised from the dead despite the fact that He had told them exactly what would happen once they came to Jerusalem...

Mark 8:31... And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

They should have listened a little more carefully. Mary's news must have shocked them.

John 20:3–5... So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, **he saw the linen wrappings lying there: but he did not go in.**

When John wrote this account, he used three different Greek words for *seeing*...

John **glanced** into the tomb and what he saw was startling. Jesus' body was nowhere to be found. Only the linens that had wrapped His body were left.

John 20:6–7... And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and **he saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.**

When Peter got there, he entered the tomb and **observed** the linen wrappings lying there. He noticed that the facecloth which had been on His

head, was not lying with the linen wrappings. It was rolled up neatly in a place by itself. Peter mulled over the scene before him and tried to make sense of it all.

John 20:8... So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

John finally mustered up the courage to enter the tomb. He perceived what had actually happened. He saw the linen wrappings. It seemed that Jesus' body had simply passed through them like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon.

The Bible says that he believed in the resurrection of Jesus before he actually saw the Lord in His resurrection glory.

John 20:9–10... For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

The fledgling faith of these beloved disciples was grounded on what they had seen (and not seen)

at the tomb. As you can see, Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb of her Lord after everyone else had gone home.

John 20:11–12... But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

Mary Magdalene initially came to the tomb early in the morning to add spices to the Lord's body and to mourn His death. Her tears were not just because Jesus was dead, but rather because His body was nowhere to be found. Stooping and peeking in the tomb, Mary encounters two angels who spoke to her...

John 20:13... And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

Their question to her was a gentle rebuke. You see, they knew something that she didn't. They

knew exactly what had happened in the tomb that morning and they knew where Jesus was—right behind her!

John 20:14... When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.

She was sure that He was dead, so the last thing she expected was to see Him alive. Why didn't she recognize Him?

Could her eyesight have been blurred from tears? Or is it possible that the sight of the bloody, bruised, and battered body of the Lord hanging on the cross was plastered in her mind? Most likely, Jesus simply chose not to reveal Himself to her immediately (Luke 24:16).

Okay, here are the first words Jesus spoke after He was resurrected from the dead...

John 20:15-16... Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me

where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

With a single word, Jesus opened Mary's eyes. He merely spoke her name, "**Mary!**" All her doubt, confusion, fear, and grief were swept away in pure euphoria. Jesus was alive!

John 20:17... Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me (present imperative), for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

I can just see Mary falling at the feet of Jesus and hanging on for dear life. She wanted things to be like they were before all of this happened. However, those who committed their lives to Jesus had to transition from a face-to-face relationship to a spiritual relationship.¹ In the

¹ Kenneth O. Gangel, [*John*](#), vol. 4, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 370.

future, His presence would be realized through the Indwelling Spirit.

Jesus didn't want her to sit on this good news; He commanded her to go to the disciples and to tell them what she had seen and heard!

John 20:18... Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and *that* He had said these things to her.

She obeyed her Lord. Her words ring with enthusiasm and anticipation—"I have seen the Lord!" The first word of the resurrected Christ was a word of *HOPE*.

CONCLUSION

"Hope" from the world's perspective is basically wishful thinking. Reduced to this level, hope can be compared to beautiful soap bubbles that disappear at the slightest touch.

Genuine biblical hope, on the other hand, requires a solid foundation and can be defined as a confident expectation. The resurrection of Jesus

is the only foundation for authentic hope. Here’s what I want you to realize this morning...

HOPE CHANGES EVERYTHING.

It certainly did for Mary Magdalene. This “*word of hope*” should remind us of three powerful truths...

1. JESUS VALUES PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

One word from the risen Lord changed this dear lady’s life—“*Mary.*” This reminds me of something the Lord taught during His ministry...

John 1:12... But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name.

John 10:27–30... “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; **28** and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. **29** “My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to

snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. **30**
"I and the Father are one."

2. JESUS TRANSFORMS BROKEN LIVES.

At one point, Mary Magdalene's life was a living hell. She was possessed by 7 demons. I can't imagine the torture and torment she must have experienced. When she encountered Jesus, He cast the demons out of her, set her free, saved her soul, and invited her to follow Him.

What Jesus did for her He can do for you. He makes His resurrection power available to you...

Romans 8:2... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Are you battling an addiction, an anger problem, an integrity issue, or a marriage crisis? The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you if you will only turn from your sin and seek the help of Jesus.

We've all sinned against God. Only the risen Jesus can give us the forgiveness we desperately need. Are you ready to believe in Him and to confess Him as your Savior and Lord?

3. JESUS INSPIRES HIS DISCIPLES.

He commanded Mary Magdalene to carry the good news of His resurrection to the disciples. **Like her, we can find that it's more comfortable to hold on to Jesus than to share Him with others.** Everyone must know the good news of the atoning death of Jesus on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead!

Titus 2:11–14... For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, **14** who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a

people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

He inspires us to anticipate the glory that awaits us in His eternal kingdom...

1 Peter 1:3–5... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, **5** who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

HOPE CHANGES EVERYTHING.