

A Time of Wilderness Spiritual Reflections during Lockdown, #2

Mary Magdalen and 'the Gardener'

During our Zoom Bible Study meeting this week (do come and join us if you haven't already!) we talked about another of the resurrection experiences: that of Mary Magdalen meeting the risen Christ outside the tomb and mistaking him for a gardener. In our discussion, which talked about how the presence of God can often come from the most unexpected encounters. Not only Christ, but Angels or messengers from God can touch our lives in day to day encounters. People speaking the right words at the right time. The extra-ordinary in the ordinary. There is a lot of comfort to be found in the fact that Mary - the first to meet the risen Christ, the Apostle to the Apostles - encountered Him as a gardener.



John 20: 14-16

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" 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." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew,^[a] "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

The resurrection narratives, such as this one, are also known as **commission narratives**. They are about conversion (or turning) and commission - a sending out, with a message to share with the world. Mary was searching for the body of Christ, she longed to find his remains and looked into the darkness of the tomb through her tears, but could not find him. Then the completely unexpected happened. Mary Magdalen turned from the tomb to see what she thought was a gardener. What could be more ordinary? Yet the gardener commissioned her to tell the greatest news of all time - **that Jesus was not dead and gone, but risen and with us**. It was only when she heard Jesus's voice say her name that she realised that this was the risen Christ. 'I am the good shepherd who calls his sheep by name and leads them out', said Jesus, they follow not because they see him, but because they know his voice.

God commissions and blesses us in the most unexpected ways, not through heavenly voices from on high, but often through the mundane and ordinary. A chance encounter, a few shared words, and ordinary day can make us feel that God has touched our lives profoundly. It may not even be until afterwards that we recognise his voice.

Ideas for prayer

Perhaps we could reflect in prayer on how God may have touched our lives in the ordinary and be thankful, or pray for an encounter like this to bless us in the future? We might pray for the resurrection hope to lift our own hearts and commission us to live out the Gospel message in our encounters with others. We might pray for the 'present-centredness' to find the still small voice of God in the ordinary of our everyday lives.