*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 26 – May 1

Mary Magdalene

**Monday, April 26 Luke 8:1-3**

*“Among them was Mary Magdalene”*

 These verses, where the work of three women of faith is noted, are unique to Luke. As Jesus ministers, he draws followers who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mary Magdalene serves after having seven demons exorcised by Jesus. Joanna, as the wife of Herod’s steward Cuza, gives evidence that Jesus’ message has reached even into the palace. When these and other women come to faith, they give of their resources to enable Jesus’ ministry to continue.

 The pattern of grace received and ministry pursued emerges in the exemplary response of these women. Their ministry comes at two levels: personal involvement and the contribution of resources. Both levels of involvement are important to effective ministry. Texts like this, affirming the role of women in a first-century culture where they were either seen as property or relegated to an almost invisible role, are significant in showing that women play a critical role in contributing to the ministry of the church.

*As were these women, may I be generous in support of your ministry, Lord. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 27 Matthew 27:55-61**

*“Mary Magdalene was sitting nearby watching”*

 Matthew tells us that there were many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee present at his crucifixion. He gives specific names for three of them, including Mary Magdalene. The presence of these women is in contrast to the scattering of the disciples. The only one of the twelve whom we know to have been present was John. The faithfulness of these women, their presence and aid in removing the body for burial, and their reason for coming to the tomb early on Easter morning are all revealed by Matthew’s account.

 The prophet Isaiah said of the Suffering Servant, “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9). Jesus had died between two robbers. The story of his burial brings in the rich, for it was Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man and a member of the ruling council, who came to the fore and asked Pilate for Jesus’ body. Joseph was a follower of Jesus who had left the ruling council when it became evident that they were determined to kill Jesus (Luke 23:51).

*May I remain faithful to you, Lord, even when doing so may be costly. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 28 John 19:25-27**

*“Now there stood by the cross . . . Mary Magdalene”*

 As there were four unbelieving soldiers at the cross (see John 19:23), so there were four believing women standing by with fear and sorrow – the mother of Jesus, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. These friends did not leave Jesus’ in his hour of desolation. Surely strength and comfort were shared with Jesus in this act of faithful companionship. Most people do not wish to be alone in the moment of death.

 Jesus now reaches out in his hour of death and cares for his mother. How tenderly the love of God, as expressed through family life, is revealed here. When Jesus calls her “woman,” he is not using a cold, formal word, but a warm term of respect. It is to John the disciple that he gives the responsibility for her care. Given that Jesus’ brothers have not believed in him (see John 7:5) and that Joseph is absent in the story, we suspect that Mary is alone. She has supported Jesus all along, and now with his death, a woman in her culture would be bereft and at risk. John will become her support and protector.

*May we care for one another, Lord, especially within our families. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 26 – May 1

Mary Magdalene

**Thursday, April 29 Mark 16:9-11**

 *“Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene”*

 The end of Mark’s Gospel has been a matter of controversy in biblical scholarship. While most early Greek editions of the New Testament include Mark 16:9-20, the two earliest Greek manuscripts that we have of Mark’s Gospel end at verse 8. Given that scholars believe that the earlier a manuscript was written the more likely it is to be authentic, most claim that the original version of Mark’s Gospel ended at verse 8 – what is known as the ‘short ending.’ However, others have asserted that the ‘long ending’ of verses 9-20 belong in the Bible, because the content is consistent not only with Mark’s earlier writing but is corroborated by the other gospels.

 In this ‘long ending’ we are told that Jesus first appears to Mary Magdalene, the woman out of which he cast seven demons. The Resurrection confirms the purpose that he set at the very onset of his public ministry, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Mary had responded faithfully to Jesus’ call and she is blessed to be the first person to whom he appears.

*I acknowledge that I am sinner, Lord, and I praise you for forgiveness. Amen.*

**Friday, April 30 John 20:1-10**

*“Mary Magdalene went to the tomb”*

 The resurrection of Jesus is not a spectacular event with crashing cymbals and blaring trumpets. No, the discovery that he is alive is like the quiet dawning of a new day heralding the defeat of the night. The risen Christ meets his friends personally and intimately at unexpected times and places, overcoming their grief and doubt. They are filled with joy and peace as they move from sorrow and fear into a new reality: Jesus is risen!

 It is Mary who first comes to the tomb. She had sinned much and Jesus had done for her what no one else could do. He had forgiven and cleansed her. So she comes in the early morning only to discover that something has happened. The stone has been removed, and when she sees the open tomb she assumes the body is gone. She must tell the disciples. So with breathless urgency she runs to share this disturbing news with Peter, still the leader in spite of his weakness, and “the other disciple, the one Jesus loved” (who we believe to be John, the author of the gospel who chooses to not name himself).

*By faith I too have discovered that you are alive, Lord, and I worship you. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 1 John 20:11-18**

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary’”*

 Mary has returned and stands weeping at the tomb. Nothing has changed for her, although when she stoops and looks in she may be hoping that the body has been returned. There is no body, but she sees an angel at both ends of the place where Jesus had been laid. Since they are messengers of life, little wonder they should ask Mary about her tears. Next she turns and mistakes Jesus for the gardener, who now also asks about her grief. Then the risen Christ speaks her name - the shepherd calling one of his sheep - and Mary recognizes his voice.

 In adoration and wonder, she falls at his feet and clings to Jesus, attempting to lay hold on past association, to grasp Jesus as he was before the crucifixion. But Jesus emphatically insists that Mary cannot continue clinging to him. In his resurrection Jesus has not only broken the bonds of sin and death, but also the limitations of space and time and the weaknesses of earthly existence. By the power of God he has become the first of the new order, the order of the resurrection.

*Through the Holy Spirit, Lord, we are able to ‘cling’ to you. Amen.*