

Dear Friend

Today is the Feast Day of Mary Magdalene. Mary has been named as the "Apostle to the Apostles" as Jesus commissioned her to bring to his disciples the news that he was risen from the dead. In doing so Jesus overturned the conventions of his day, which reckoned the testimony of women to be unreliable, and so they were unable to be witnesses in any court as they could not be believed! Unsurprisingly perhaps, Jesus' friends found it impossible to believe Mary's testimony. Luke records their response: "But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." (Luke 24.11)

Nevertheless Mary remains an outstanding figure in the story of the resurrection. Her tears were transformed into laughter as Jesus called her name, as she realised that this ordinary looking man - just the gardener - was in fact her Saviour and her Lord. Mary had experienced in a mighty way Jesus' power to save, as he had delivered her from seven demons (Luke 8.2). That encounter with Jesus had wrought a transformation in her life, as he set her free to be the woman God had always intended her to be - a woman of deep faith, love and devotion to her master, her teacher, her "Rabbouni".

Then at the point of despair as she is left bewildered and fearful not knowing what has happened to Jesus' body, she hears her name, spoken in that familiar way, and her life is once again transformed.

Mary leaves for us a great example of discipleship. Although it is unlikely that we have ever found ourselves in such great need of deliverance as Mary was before she met Jesus, the truth is that every single one of us is in need of Jesus' transforming touch. We all have parts of our life that need to be changed. The power of Jesus to affect change in the human heart is the same as it always was. Can we believe that we can be changed? Speaking personally, I have to confess that there are times when the change I long to see in myself is painfully slow, and there are times when we can all take a step backwards rather than moving forwards. But God is always at work in the heart of every person who allows him to do that work. We can only imagine how Mary must have felt as her life was lived in the darkness of evil. Change for her appears to have been instantaneous, but although those seven evil spirits would have departed from her at Jesus' word, no doubt the process of healing and restoration of her broken heart and life, would take many years.

And so it is for us; God is patient with us, waiting for our willingness to fully submit our lives to his will and goodness, and for him to do whatever he wants in and with us. The Lord is constantly calling us to submit our wills to his, to surrender our hearts to him, so that we might be witnesses to this Jesus - risen from the dead and alive for evermore.

Verses for today: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."



Romans 12.1-2

The Collect for today:

Almighty God,
whose Son restored Mary Magdalene
to health of mind and body
and called her to be a witness to his resurrection:
forgive our sins and heal us by your grace,
that we may serve you in the power of his risen life;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

With much love and prayer

Simon