

## EASTER DEVOTION

### John 20:11-18 (EHV)

But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent over, looking into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white clothes sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. 13) They asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She told them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they have laid him.” 14) After she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus. 15) Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will get him.” 16) Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and replied in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means, “Teacher”). 17) Jesus told her, “Do not continue to cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father—to my God and your God.’” 18) Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” She also told them the things he said to her.

Friends,

Soon after Jesus cried out with a loud voice from the darkness, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*” he loudly announced, “*It is finished!*” Then, *bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.* (John 19:30 EHV) His body was removed from the cross by two “secret followers:” Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (cf. John 19:38-39)

*Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60) and laid it in his own new tomb that he had cut in the rock. He rolled a large stone over the tomb’s entrance and left. 61) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb.* (Matthew 27:59-61 EHV)

***Dead in the grave he lay, mourned by ev’ry friend.  
Those dark and fearful days then did reach their end.  
God raised him to life, Victor in the strife.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*** (CW 146:3)

Alleluia! Alleluia! It would be interesting to count how many times that word is repeated in a typical Easter worship service.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately we won’t be able to do that this year. Alleluia is a Latin word meaning praise the Lord. (In case you are curious, Hallelujah comes from the Hebrew and also means praise the Lord.)

Surely we have reason to praise the Lord, today. Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior and the victory he won over sin, death and the devil for us. Alleluia! How different it is for us than it was for Mary Magdalene on that first Easter Sunday.

Mary Magdalene had witnessed the death of Jesus. She watched as he was buried and then she went home to observe the Sabbath and to mourn the loss of her friend. As soon as the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene together with a number of other women took some spices and hurried to the tomb of Jesus. They wanted to complete the task of preparing Jesus’ body for burial which had been done so hastily on Friday afternoon.

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<sup>1</sup> The word alleluia appears 52 times in this devotion including once in this footnote. Hallelujah appears one time.

*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared.* (Luke 24:1 EHV) They must have felt the earthquake when the angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the entrance to Jesus' tomb. (cf. Matthew 28:2) It had been a "shaky" couple of days – the earth shook and rocks split on Friday when Jesus died too. (cf. Matthew 27:51) That could have been a topic of conversation as they went to the tomb but it seems that they were too focused on the task at hand to worry about that. *They were saying to each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb for us?"* (Mark 16:3 EHV)

But low and behold, when they arrived at the tomb – it was open. They discovered the meaning of the earth quake. God was "shaking things up." His Son – the one he sacrificed on the cross for our sins – defeated death by rising victoriously from the grave! *They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb. 3) When they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.* (Luke 24:2-3 EHV)

Angel messengers asked them, *"Why are you looking for the living among the dead? 6) He is not here, but has been raised! Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee 7) that the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?"* (Luke 24:5-7 EHV)

The women reported these things to Peter and the apostles. Peter and John rushed to the garden where Jesus had been buried and found it just as the women had said. The tomb was empty! Peter was amazed at what he saw. *Bending over to look in, he saw only the strips of linen cloth. He went home, amazed at what had happened.* (Luke 24:12 EHV) John saw and believed. (cf. John 20:8)

Now Mary Magdalene was alone – standing outside of the empty tomb weeping. She too looked into the tomb. She, too, saw the two angels who were seated where Jesus body had been placed – one at the head the other at the foot. *They asked her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She told them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have laid him."* (John 20:13 EHV)

Mary Magdalene was alone – alone in her grief and sorrow. Mary Magdalene was alone – alone and in need of comfort and reassurance. Mary Magdalene was alone; tears of sorrow filled her eyes, no alleluias fell from her lips. There was only the question: "Where is he? What has happened to him? Who took his body away? Mary Magdalene was alone with her questions.

But Mary Magdalene wasn't alone for long – her living Savior came to her in her time of need and stood alongside of her. *Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will get him." 16) Jesus said to her, "Mary."* (John 20:15-16 EHV)

The tender word of Jesus who called her by name was all it took! She knew that voice and called out to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni" (which means Teacher). (cf. John 20:16) She longed to be with him, to hang onto him and to never let him go – but Jesus had an assignment for her. *Jesus told her, "Do not continue to cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father—to my God and your God.'"* (John 20:17) And so Mary Magdalene went. She told the apostles what she had learned and heard from the teacher. She

had seen him – he was alive! He would be returning to be with his heavenly Father – his Father and their Father! His God and their God!

Upon the completion of his sacrifice on the cross, God and sinners were reconciled. They now enjoy a friendly relationship with each other. The Father who had abandoned his Son on the cross would welcome him to heavenly glory.

What does this mean for us? (The hymn I Know That My Redeemer Lives provides a wonderful answer to this question.) It means that we are no longer alone. It means that because of Jesus our sins no longer separate us from God – we too can call him Father. Alleluia! We can depend on his loving care and provision. Alleluia! We can be sure that one day he will welcome us to his heavenly home. Alleluia.

Alleluia! Praise the Lord! Just what does it mean to praise the Lord? When we praise someone we really are simply telling them how wonderful we think they are. When we “sing someone’s praises,” we’re telling others how wonderful we think they are. And so this Easter we can share our “alleluias” with Jesus – telling him how wonderful we think he is because of everything he has done for us. But, let’s not stop there! Let’s “sing his praises” to others – telling them the wonderful things he has done for them so they can join their “alleluias” with ours.

**The Strife Is O'er, The Battle Done Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (CW 148)**

1) The strife is o'er, the battle done;  
Now is the victor's triumph won;  
Now be the song of praise begun. Alleluia!

2) Death's mightiest pow'rs have done their worst,  
And Jesus has his foes dispersed;  
Let shouts of praise and joy outburst. Alleluia!

3) On the third morn he rose again  
Glorious in majesty to reign;  
Oh, let us swell the joyful strain! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Amen.

The following hymn invites us to reflect on the Gospel accounts of Jesus resurrection.

**O Sons And Daughters Of The King (CW 165)**

1) O sons and daughters of the King,  
Whom heav'nly hosts in glory sing,  
Today the grave has lost its sting!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

2) On that first morning of the week,  
Before the day began to break,

The Marys went their Lord to seek.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

3) An angel bade their sorrow flee,  
For thus he spoke unto the three,  
"Your Lord will go to Galilee."  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

4) That night th' apostles met in fear;  
Among them came their Lord most dear  
And said: "Peace be unto you here."  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

5) When Thomas afterwards had heard  
That Jesus had fulfilled his word,  
He doubted if it were the Lord.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

6) "Thomas, behold my side," said he,  
"My hands, my feet, my body see;  
And doubt not, but believe in me."  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

7) No longer Thomas then denied;  
He saw the feet, the hands, the side;  
"You are my Lord and God," he cried.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

7) Blessed are they that have not seen  
And yet whose faith has constant been;  
In life eternal they shall reign.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

8) On this most holy day of days  
To God your hearts and voices raise  
In laud and jubilee and praise.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

It's an Easter tradition to sing, I know that my Redeemer lives. Let the tradition continue as you sing or say it this Easter too! And may it remind you of the blessings that you enjoy because your Savior lives.

**I Know That My Redeemer Lives** (CW 152)

1) I know that my Redeemer lives;  
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my ever-living Head!

2) He lives triumphant from the grave;  
He lives eternally to save.  
He lives all-glorious in the sky;  
He lives exalted there on high.

3) He lives to bless me with his love;  
He lives to plead for me above.  
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;  
He lives to help in time of need.

4) He lives to grant me rich supply;  
He lives to guide me with his eye.  
He lives to comfort me when faint;  
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.

5) He lives to silence all my fears;  
He lives to wipe away my tears.  
He lives to calm my troubled heart;  
He lives, all blessings to impart.

6) He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend;  
He lives and loves me to the end.  
He lives, and while he lives I'll sing;  
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.

7) He lives and grants me daily breath;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death.  
He lives my mansion to prepare;  
He lives to bring me safely there.

8) He lives, all glory to his name!  
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:  
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"