



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 20:11-18

"Mary Magdalene and the Resurrection"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] John chapter 20 verse 11 through verse 18. We are drawing near the end of the exposition of this unusually marvelous portion of the word of God and I for one feel a little sad that we are drawing near the end. But the end of the gospel is some of the best of its teaching. So that to some extent makes up for the sadness of coming to the end of it. In chapter 20 you may remember from last week if you were here, John gave us his testimony to the manner by which he came to faith in the resurrection. He described the events that were important to him. He also described what he saw when he went down into the tomb. He saw the linen clothes in a special position, and particularly the napkin that had been about the head of our Lord. He saw that retaining its annular or twirled shape on the raised ledge on a place by itself. And by the testimony of the empty tomb and the testimony of the grave clothes, John gives evidence that it is through this especially that he came to understand the resurrection of Christ. He says, of course, later he remembered that the Lord had said to him that he would rise from the dead. But at this point he had not yet put together the facts with the message that Jesus had given him.

We remember too that it Mary Magdalene who had been out to the tomb with some others of the ladies, and it is she who had returned to Peter and to John and had told them that the body of our Lord had been removed from the tomb. And Peter and John had raced out to the tomb with

John outrunning Peter but not going down into the tomb because he stooped and looked and saw the grave clothes and must have thought the body was really there and made a mistake. But Peter came and went down into the tomb. He must have called John, and John went down into the tomb. And they both seemed satisfied that the resurrection had taken place and went on their way home.

Mary, in the meantime, had apparently returned to the tomb. And so the story is resumed at that point and in verse 11 of chapter 20 the apostle writes,

"But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. (Now notice carefully that she was talking with the angels, but suddenly she turned around. John does not tell us why. But she turned back and she saw the Lord standing, but she was not at this point able to recognize him.) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. (The Greek text has the expression Mariam, Mariam being the Aramaic term for Mary.) She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni (the Aramaic term for Master); which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father. (Now let me just interrupt again. The words, "Touch me not" are the translation of a Greek expression that probably more often has the sense of touch but since it is a present tense, touch with a durative force which results in the sense of stop clinging to me, that's probably the force of it. So "Stop clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to my Father.) But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her."

That's very vivid in the original text. She came to the disciples and she said, "I have seen the Lord," direct discourse. "I have seen the Lord." And then John said that she had told these other things to them. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. And let's bow together in a brief time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word of God. And we thank Thee for this day, the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection, the Lord's Day, the day in which we meet not simply to have fellowship with one another but preeminently to have fellowship with the risen Lord through the Scriptures. And we thank Thee for the testimony of the word of God which has so fully and completely and convincingly given testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We give Thee thanks, our heavenly Father, for a risen Messiah, a risen Lord who ever lives to make intercession for us. And today we thank Thee. We praise Thy name. And we pray that through the days of this week, we as Mary may go telling the good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the privilege of proclaiming that message and ask, Lord, thy blessing upon it in this meeting. And if there are some in this meeting who do not know with assurance the forgiveness of sins and the relationship to the Lord Jesus we pray, O God, that Thou wilt through the Holy Spirit bring conviction and conversion to the glory of Thy name.

We thank Thee for the promises of the word of God which assure us that our needs shall be met. And we commit ourselves to Thee, and we commit those in this audience to Thee who have need of the ministry of the triune God. At this moment and throughout the days that are ahead. We especially remember those in our calendar of concern. And we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt minister to them and supply the needs that exist. We pray for this assembly of believers and friends. And we ask Thy blessing upon the elders, and deacons, and members of Believers Chapel, upon the friends who are gathered here. We pray, Lord, Thy blessing on the ministry of the Chapel, its radio ministry and publications ministry and Bible classes and other forms of personal outreach, for the many

faithful representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ who through the days of the week represent him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood.

And then Father in this hour may we have the sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in illumination, and may our meeting redound ultimately to the glory of our great God in heaven. We give Thee thanks now. We pray Thy blessing upon us as we sing another hymn, may it be from the heart to the glory of God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We turn to John chapter 20 and verse 11 through verse 18, and our subject this morning is "Mary Magdalene and the Resurrection." How important is strong devotion to the Lord." The writer of the Proverbs states in the 8th chapter of his marvelous book of practical wisdom, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" That's a marvelous statement, and a wonderful promise. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." Of course he's speaking about wisdom, but wisdom in the personified sense is a reference to ultimately our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and this is a marvelous promise.

If you had been asked to write a gospel, fabricate a gospel, and if you had known something of the events that transpired up to the time of the cross. And then you were told that you were to write a section in which the Lord Jesus Christ should be pictured as rising again from the dead, and then giving a commission. You probably would have surely thought that the way in which you should write the resurrection narratives would gather around the apostles, the men who had been so commonly and often with him. And isn't it strange really that the messenger of the empty tomb should be Mary Magdalene, a woman.

Now, of course Mary was very important for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know from some of the statements of the Synoptic Gospels that it was they who were responsible for much of the supply needs of our Lord. They gave him financial help, for of course he depended upon the Lord through the individuals who helped him from time to time. And it is specifically said that she among others gave to him of their substance.

And then if you ask who will be the messenger of the living and risen Messiah you would never have thought that it would be first of all, a woman. You would have thought that it would have been one of the apostles and probably Peter or John, one of the important ones. But she is not only the messenger of the empty tomb; she is the messenger of the risen Messiah. It's one of those little things in the word of God that assure us or confirm to us the historicity of the accounts that we read and study and appreciate so much.

Well Mary has given the announcement of the empty tomb, and now she is back at the tomb. The apostles, Peter and John, having come and then having left. And then as the account that we are to study now begins, Mary Magdalene is standing outside the tomb of our Lord weeping. And we read that as she wept she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. Something must have caught her attention, and as she looked down into the sepulcher she saw two angels in white sitting. I like that expression, "She was standing outside looking at the tomb," because as you read through this account it becomes evident that she is very, very much associated with this one thing, this tomb where the Lord Jesus Christ's body had been. In other words, it's almost as if she has a kind of one track mind. The thing that she's interested in is the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary, after all, was a person out of whom had come seven demons, so the Bible says. And she was grateful for that which the Lord Jesus had done for her. She's a marvelous illustration of how we who have delivered from the guilt and power of sin should appreciate and be thankful for the things that the Lord Jesus has done.

Many years ago when I was studying this account, I read a story of a father who had tried to persuade his young son that he did not really want an ice cream cone or that he did not need an ice cream cone. They were driving along the road together in an automobile and the little boy had said, "Daddy, I want an ice cream cone." And thinking that it would be desirable to give some reasons why rather than simply saying no, he launched into an explanation of why he thought it would be bad for him to have an ice cream cone. He said it was already late in the afternoon, and furthermore on top of all the other sweets that he had eaten not too long ago an ice cream cone would probably be

bad for him. And in addition supper would come and that might ruin his appetite. He gave a number of good rational reasons why the young man should not have an ice cream cone. And after a rather lengthy treatise, quiet settled in the automobile. And he patted his back figuratively for managing to give such a reasonable explanation of why he should not have an ice cream and contentedly continued to drive down the road. Well, after a lengthy bit of silence the boy spoke and said, "Daddy." "What son?" "I want an ice cream cone." [Laughter]

A one track can be a very useful thing, of course, and in Mary's case she had a one track mind. She was thinking of the Lord Jesus and she was thinking of what she had gained knowing him and what she had lost, no doubt, because he was no longer with her. Well, seeing the angels sitting there, one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain, she was probably surprised when they spoke to her and said, "Woman why weepest thou?" I've always thought that was good, it's a rather sympathetic question on the part of the angels, and it's of course in thorough harmony with what we know about the angels. We are taught in the word of God that they are those who minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. And so they were seeking to minister to Mary Magdalene who was one of the heirs of salvation.

One other interesting thing that is told us in the word of God about the angels is that they do not, of course, experience salvation, because they do not know what it is to be lost and then delivered from their lostness and come to the forgiveness of sins. There are elect angels, and there are non-elect angels and the elect angels are those who have been elected by God never to fall but to remain in fellowship with him. So they do not know the experience of redemption. And they are puzzled by it, so puzzled by it that they are extremely interested in it. In fact, the Apostle Peter will say in his first letter when he talks about preaching the gospel, he says, "Which things the angels desire to look into." And Paul tells us that God teaches the angels the manifold wisdom of God through the church of Jesus Christ. So as amazing as it may seem, we are the instrumentality by which the angels learn the manifold wisdom of God. They see his justice and his righteousness, and they see evidence of his love. And they see the power of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus

Christ in the fact that sinners, rebellious individuals by the preaching of the gospel, are transformed in their life, literally often stopped in their tracks and by the power of God forced to turn and become worshipers of the one against whom they had rebelled before. So the angels are concerned about spiritual things.

And they ask Mary, too, "Why weepst thou?" That's interesting too when we think that even angels are puzzled by women's tears. [Laughter] Now all of us who are men know the experience of being puzzled by the tears of women. How often, men, have you spoken to your wife or some friend who happened to be weeping and you say, "Why are you weeping?" And often you'll get the reply, "I'm weeping because I'm so happy." It seems so strange to us men. And I'm happy that the angels are puzzled as well. Now of course in a moment the Lord Jesus will say, "Why weepst thou?" And I don't think he was really puzzled. He was anxious to lead Mary to himself. And so he quickly asks, "Whom seekest thou?"

Well, Mary replies to the angels first in a rather dejected way. In the 13th verse sensational we read, "Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him." Isn't it also interesting that she is weeping because of the empty tomb? Now that's a rather ironic thing, isn't it? Of all the things that should be giving Mary joy it was the empty tomb. But instead of looking at it from the divine standpoint, she's looking at it from the human standpoint. She's thinking not so much of what she's gained by the resurrection of the Lord, she's thinking rather of what she has lost. And so her thoughts are all together turned toward herself. And so she says, "They've taken away my Lord." She's identified again our Lord with his body and she thinks that he is taken away because the body is no longer there, and she doesn't know where they have placed him. Weeping because of the empty tomb when she should be shouting for joy, ideally. I think that is so characteristic of us, too. So what we can say about Mary is she was a very, very devoted woman, but her faith at this point is a defective faith. But remember the statement of the Proverbs, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." And so she shall find the Lord.

And we read that as she is standing there and replying to the angels, "And when she had thus said, she turned herself back." Now one might wonder why in speaking with the angels she should turn away from them. There must have been some reason for it. I'm sure that if I should ever speak to an angel you wouldn't find me turning away from the angels without having some good reason for it. Well, the text doesn't really tell us what the reason is, but John Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers who ministered in the 4th century, he gives a singularly beautiful treatment of this by saying that as the Lord appeared the angels did obeisance, and Mary turned to see to whom they were bowing. Well, it makes good sense that as she was speaking with the angels, suddenly they begin to bow down and she looks around to see to whom they were bowing down. And she looked and she thought what she thought was the gardener.

She saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. And the person whom she thought was the gardener said to her, "Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?" Now, she had been looking for something and he leads her thoughts to someone. She's thinking about the body, and so he says, "Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?" He points her to someone. So often that is our response in spiritual experiences. We think of things when ideally our Lord would like us to keep our thoughts upon him, because it's the personal relationship in the final analysis that is important. And so she supposing him to be the gardener, after all she was in Joseph's place. Joseph was a wealthy man. He as a man who evidently had his own private garden and his own private tomb that he had hewn out at great expense, the kind of personal tomb that a wealthy man would have. And you have expected him to have a gardener. And so she saw the man before whom the angels had knelt in obeisance, thinking that he was Joseph's gardener she said to him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

So she plans a second burial for our Lord. I imagine she was really confused by what was happening, and so thinking that perhaps Joseph had put our Lord in his tomb worthy of a rich man, he was now being transferred to another place. So she plans another interment. She had gone out originally with the other women to finish some of the burial arrangements, the personal things with

reference to our Lord's body, which they had not had time to do, since our Lord had had to be taken down from the cross quickly after his crucifixion. So, "Tell me where you've put him, I will take him away."

And then the Lord with one word awakened in her a response. "Mariam," and there was just something about the word itself that brought recognition to her. This magnificent simple word Mariam. Now if you've been a careful reader of the Gospel of John, if you've been listening to the ministry of the word of God as we've tried to expound this magnificent book, you may remember that in some of the chapters preceding the Lord Jesus Christ through the apostle has made reference to the importance of hearing his voice. For example, in the great chapter on the good shepherd, John chapter 10, the messages which now are being heard over WRR here in Dallas. In the 3rd verse of the 10th chapter the Lord Jesus speaking about the shepherd and the porter at the door of the fold says, "To him the porter openeth and the sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." And then in the 27th verse of John 10 the Lord said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." There was something distinctive about the Lord's voice for Mary that she would never forget. And when he said to her, "Mariam," she knew his voice and replied immediately, "Rabboni," or teacher.

Now we all know what that is. My father died almost thirteen years ago. I would never forget his voice. I would know his voice if I should hear it now as his voice. If he were to speak, and I were not to see his face, and if he were to say to me, "Lewis," I would know his voice. There is something about the distinctive quality of his voice that marks him out as my father. Now every Christian, every genuine Christian knows what our Lord is speaking about when he said, "My sheep hear my voice." If you walk down the street and you were to walk by the Christian Science Monitor Reading Room and look in and see Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy's *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures* opened up in the window and start reading, well my old theology professor used to say, "I have opened up that book or have read that book and to me it makes just as much sense if

you began at the back of the book and read it upside down, as if you begin at the beginning and read it right side up."

And he said once when he first did that it puzzled him that he could understand nothing about it until the Holy Spirit brought home to him this very passage. "My sheep hear my voice." And that is true, the shepherd's voice the sheep know. And those who are genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ know his voice. And when the Lord Jesus said, "Mariam," she knew, "Rabboni." Now, of course that's in the physical sphere, but that's the principle that pertains in the spiritual sphere. That's why the sheep are kept from the false influences that are about them. You never have to worry really about the ultimate safety and security of those who have truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh they may be from time to time misled for a bit, they may be taken in by some of the cultists of our day, and there are many of them. But in the final analysis, his sheep hear his voice.

There is that distinctive testimony that comes from the Holy Spirit and the Lord that marks us out as his own and marks him out as our own. It is *the testimonium interim spiritus sancta* -- the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that says in effect that the word of God is the word of God and the saints respond to it. It's the sovereign activity of God in the hearts of his people. Now, those who are not his people cannot understand this. That's why Paul says, "That natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God. They are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." His sheep hear his voice. Those that are not his sheep do not hear his voice. They find his voice puzzling, troublesome, nonsensical, often arouses within them the natural rebellion of the human heart. I like this, "Mariam." "Rabboni." She had thought he was the gardener, but the voice awakened in her the sense of the identity of the Lord Jesus.

Last night I was reading a commentary on the Apostle John. I always like to keep reading some new one each time I go through the Gospel of John. And I was reading another commentary last night on this section, and the writer of the commentary told of a story that he had read about in one of the books that he had been reading. One of the ministers had a funeral for people to whom the funeral source was only a form, who did not have any Christian faith, who did not really

understand Christianity at all. And when the funeral service was over, one of the daughters of the family walked by the casket and said, "Goodbye father." It's the end for those who have no Christian hope, but for us, the author went on to say it's literally adieu to God, and it's literally until we meet again. There is that personal relationship to the Lord that means everything. And our Lord caused that to rise out of Mary when he said to her simply, "Mary." "Rabboni." They had met again.

A long time ago I read a story about an Eastern parable. And in this Eastern parable a sheik one day met a woman who was carrying in her one hand a basin of water. In her other hand she held a torch. And the sheik asked her what she meant to do with the water in one hand and the torch in the other. She said, "Well, with one of them I'm going to put out the flames of hell. And I'm going to burn up the glories of heaven with the torch." "Why are you going to do this?" asked the sheik. And her reply was, "That men may love God for what he is in himself and not for what they escape or what they receive." And so here, Mary is brought to that relationship, that personal relationship that we each should enjoy with him. We're not like Jacob, we're not going to serve the Lord for what we can get, but we are going to serve the Lord because of what he is. And Mary says, "Master."

And at this point there comes the commission, a lovely commission and I want to spend just a few moments on it. First of all, he said, "Stop clinging to me." It's clear that Mary is going to be the first witness of the resurrection, a woman mind you. Now, I hear a lot of talk from the feminists these days, and so do you. And some of the things that they say may be valid and genuine. I don't want to either criticize or praise the movement as a whole. But one thing I will say I have never seen them yet claim that it was a woman who was the first witness of the resurrection, but she was. Now, they don't seem to go in for this kind of thing. But nevertheless it's true; a woman is the first witness of the resurrection. That's for the humbling of us who are men.

But Jesus said to her, because evidently when she said, "Rabboni," she fell at the feet of our Lord and must have grasped his legs. And he said, "Stop clinging to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father." A number of different explanations have been given for this. I for simplicities sake will just simply give you the one that I think is the most valid one. I think that what

she had suggested by what she had done was that our Lord is perhaps is to remain with her, or at least she expressed the idea that she wanted him to remain with her in the physical sense. And our Lord replies, "Stop clinging to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father."

Now he was not talking just simply about going to the Father, but he uses a tense in the Greek verb that means not simply that he will go to the Father, but that he will go to the Father and the benefits of his going to the Father will abide. For those of you who may have a Greek testament before you, and there probably are some in the audience, the tense you will notice is a perfect tense. And so it could be rendered something like this, "Stop clinging to me for I have not yet reached my ascended state." He's thinking about the position that he has occupied during this whole present age. So this is why he said to Mary, "It's not yet the time to cling to me. When I reach my ascended state then you will cling to me, but you will not cling to me in the physical sense, you will cling to me in the spiritual sense. Because when I reach the right hand of the Father and am there in my session at the right hand of the Father, not only you Mary but all Christians will have the opportunity to cling to me spiritually and know that I am there for your needs at all of the times of your Christian experience, all the times of your days." Magnificent to think that the Lord Jesus is now not simply ministering to the eleven, or even to the eleven and the company of believers, that group of about five hundred people perhaps; but now he is ministering to all at all times. "So Mary stop clinging to me, I've not yet reached my ascended state. Then you may call upon me. Then you may find that I am ready to bless you at any moment of the day."

But having warned her against clinging to him, he turns to the positive side of the ministry that she is to give. He says, "But go to my brethren and say unto them I ascend unto my Father." The first thing that she is told to do is she's to be a messenger of the ascension, not I am coming back at this point, though that of course is part of any message concerning the Lord; but I am going away. When the resurrection took place the apostles could look at the cross and see that the cross was not really a defeat. It was a victory for the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. Now, when he reaches the right hand of the Father, that is the purpose of the death and resurrection for this age. It

is not simply that he'd make the atoning sacrifice on the cross, but that he'd ascend to the right hand of the Father and there make his constant intercession to be sure that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have all of the salvation that the Lord Jesus has provided for them. In other words, he lives at the right hand of the throne of God to secure the ultimate salvation and blessing of all of the sheep of God. He has become the lamb on the throne shepherding the flock of God and making certain that they will experience all of the salvation that was provided in the blood that was shed.

Now, I think that that is a magnificent thought, to realize that the Lord Jesus is there having accomplished the finished work of atonement, the fundamental foundation of salvation. He now lives in heaven to secure, make certain all the benefits that flow from that atoning work for the believers in Jesus Christ. Isn't it a comforting thought? Isn't that a magnificent thing to realize that in all of the experiences of life the Lord Jesus is there securing the blessing, guaranteeing the blessing, all of the promises that he has made for the ultimate well being of all of his sheep. I find that most encouraging. And I find it something that is sufficient for us in all of the experiences of life.

Now he also says, "Mary, I've not yet ascended. I am going to ascend, of course. But I want you to go to my brethren." He's going to announce a new family relationship. "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." Brethren, think of it, think of the Lord Jesus as referring to me as my brother Lewis. Think of that. Now that individual sense is not found in Scripture, but the idea that we belong to our Lord in one family of God is stated in many different ways. "I ascend to my Father. Go and tell my brethren." Now mind you his brethren, the apostles have forsaken him and have fled at the time of the cross in unbelief, in fear, but he still calls them brethren. In fact, in the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer of that epistle in the second chapter cites a text from the Old Testament applies it to believers in the present day and says that he is not ashamed to call them brethren. He's not ashamed of us. He ought to be ashamed of us, speaking naturally, but he's not ashamed to call us brethren. Think of that. He's willing to die for these erring sheep, and then when they've been brought into the fold, even though they still tend to drift from him, he's not ashamed to call them brethren.

Now, someone might say, "To think of the Lord as my brother is perhaps a bit too strong, because after all is he not the Son of God?" Oh, yes he is the Son of God and we should never forget that there is a sense in which our Lord is not our brother. We'll point that out in a moment. But remember this; the Apostle Paul says that he "is the firstborn among many brethren." So he is sovereign and supreme, but still we are his brethren, and he's not ashamed to call us that.

And he says, "Say to them I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." He doesn't say by the way, our Father, but my Father, your Father, my God, your God; not our Father, not our God, through there is a sense in which he could say that. But he's making a very careful distinction. There is a sense in which his God is our God and his Father is our Father, but there is a further sense which we do not share with him in the paternal relationship with the eternal God. Let me put it this way; he can say that God is his Father by eternal generation. We cannot say that. We can say that God is our Father by temporal regeneration. But he can say it by eternal generation. He doesn't need any regeneration. His relationship is an eternal relationship of Son. The Father is eternal; the Son is the eternal Son. We are now sons by temporal regeneration. So our relationship is different from his, and yet we call him Father. And our Lord distinguishes this by the little word "and," "Go and say I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." So he's the Son, he's the Son who's subordinate for a time in the relationship of Messiahship in function but not in the divine essence.

And finally, we read in the 18th verse, "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord." I like the way this is put in the Greek text. It is something like this, "Mary Magdalene cometh telling." In other words, that's the characteristic thing that seems to stand out about her. She is talking. I know you'd expect that from the lady, but this is talking the gospel, and that is difficult. But Mary is a beautiful illustration of a mourner who now by the grace of God and the personal relationship to the Lord has become a missionary of the grace of God. And so she comes telling, and with all who meet the risen Messiah this is their experience. And he has now

ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there he is ministering to see that we have all of the benefits that he has earned for us by the blood that was shed.

One of my favorite characters, as you know, is George Whitefield. One of the reasons I like Mr. Whitefield so much is that I think he was probably one of the greatest Christians since the days of the apostles. And Mr. Whitefield was a strong believer, as you well know, in the sovereign grace of God. He was probably the greatest evangelist that England ever produced. There are many testimonies to that effect. It was he who was responsible for Mr. Wesley's ministry. And in fact, if Wesley had not known Whitefield, the chances are the whole Wesleyan movement and the evangelical revival would never have taken place.

George Whitefield came to this country and had a large hand in the New England revivals. And on top of it he was one of the strongest believers in the sovereign mercy of God. If he were sitting out in the audience and heard me in my most Calvinistic hour he would have said, "Hallelujah." He might have said, "I could have done it better." But nevertheless he would have said, "Hallelujah," because the doctrine that I proclaim is the doctrine that Mr. Whitefield proclaimed. He was a magnificent servant of God, and his death is a most thrilling thing.

You know, I have some friends who say, "How in the world can you possibly evangelize by believing in sovereign divine election?" That's the thing that gives motivation for evangelism. If I thought that the salvation of a soul depended upon the individual entirely, then I would be most despairing because the Scriptures tell me that ever individual is naturally rebellious against God. If I didn't have the assurance that God in sovereign mercy changes the rebellious nature of individuals and brings them to the Lord God, I would be most despairing. I would give up preaching, because I have no confidence in rebellious men responding to the word of God. For God says they will not, apart from divine influence. "No man come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him," Jesus said. I believe that. That's why I preach with confidence that he will continue to draw some. You see, that doctrine is the greatest incentive for evangelism that you can possibly have. Mr. Whitefield knew that and carried it out.

Near the end of his life, I was reading again last night the chapter in Arnold Dallimore's two volume work on Whitefield in which he describes his last day. He had come to realize that his life was largely at an end. And he was on his way back to Georgia hoping to get there before he died, and perhaps also to get back to Britain. But he was obviously getting worse and worse in his physical condition. And in the year 1770, September 29 about 213 years ago from today, he was traveling back South. And he came to Exeter in Massachusetts, and the people prevailed upon him to preach. "Sir," said a friend to him, "You're more fit to go to bed than to preach." "True," replied Mr. Whitefield, "and then clasping his hands and looking up to heaven he added, "Lord Jesus I am weary in thy work but not of it. If I have not yet finished my course let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal thy truth, and come home and die." Well, when they heard that Mr. Whitefield was in Exeter a large crowd gathered. They brought out a hog's head and big old barrel.

And Mr. Whitefield stood on the barrel and he preached. And the text that he preached on was, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." And a person who was there gave this account of his last open air sermon. "Mr. Whitefield arose and he stood erect, and his appearance alone was a powerful sermon. He remained several minutes unable to speak and then said, 'I'll wait for the gracious assistance of God for he will, I'm certain, assist me once more to speak in his name.'" And then he delivered this individual felt was one of his best sermons. And in the midst of that sermon he said, "God forbid that I should travel," or rather he had said previously, "God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them. And believe me I'm willing to go to prison and death for you. But I'm not willing to go to heaven without you." And as he was drawing near the end of this particular message he said, "I go to rest prepared. My sun has arisen and by aide from heaven has given light to many. It is not about to set. No, it's about to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. Many may outlive me on the earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Oh thought divine. I soon shall be in a world where time, age, pain, and sorrow are unknown. My body fails. My spirit expands. How willingly would I live forever to preach Christ, but I die to be with him."

That night he went to the Presbyterian manse where he had often been. Everybody was so concerned about his health that he had something to eat, and then he started upstairs to his bed very early. Well, the people in town heard that he was there; it was in Newburyport, Massachusetts. And they crowded around the house and demanded again that he speak to them. And standing halfway up the steps on the landing to the second story he preached his last sermon. And then that next morning very early went into the presence of the Lord. This is the man who said, "God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them. And believe me I am willing to go to prison and die for you, but I am not willing to go to heaven without you."

May God help us to remember that it is the duty of us who are Christians, and it's the natural response of those who have experienced the redemption of the Good Shepherd as sheep to make him known? If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we invite you to come to the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. Give yourself to him. Receive the forgiveness of sins freely through the blood that was shed. For those of you who are Christians and most of you in this audience are Christians, we remind you of our responsibilities to make our Good Shepherd known. He's not ashamed to call us brethren. Are we ashamed to call him our Lord? May God help us to truly preach him.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these magnificent accounts and Lord, we thank Thee for the way Thou hast fulfilled Thy word and the great men like Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield and others, the saints of God down through the centuries, the sheep who've not been ashamed of their Shepherd's voice. Lord, may we too...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]