

## THE ENCOUNTER

Scripture used: [John 20:11-18](#)

### OVERVIEW

Today, Easter Sunday, Pastor Hurmon opened the message “The Encounter” with Mary Magdalene searching for Jesus’ body after finding His tomb empty. Two angels sitting in the empty tomb ask her why she is crying. She desperately explains that she does not know where her Lord’s body has been placed. Then, a man Mary assumes to be a gardener asks her again why she is crying and whom she is looking for. Mary begs the man to tell her where the body of Jesus has been placed. But this man is not the gardener - He is the resurrected Jesus! He calls out her name, “Mary,” and she recognizes Him as the Risen Messiah! Soon after this ultimate encounter, Mary proclaims to Jesus’ disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” Mary was granted this most amazing Easter gift of being the first to see the resurrected Christ. Do we still have the ability to encounter the resurrected Jesus as Mary did on that first Easter?

### KEY POINTS

Pastor Hurmon shared with us three prayers that God always answers - three Easter gifts illustrated in Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

1. **Gift/Prayer #1: Lord, forgive me.** Jesus, beaten and hanging on the cross, looks at the crowd below Him and prays to ask his Father to forgive them. His words in [Luke 23:34](#) show us that even though He is experiencing horrific suffering, His thoughts are on the forgiveness of the people. Those same words are extended to all who would seek God’s forgiveness today. [Psalm 103:12](#) tells us that God removes our sin as far as the east is from the west. When we come to God and ask for His forgiveness, we are freed from the punishment of sin and cleansed of all shame and guilt. Because Christ paid the price of our punishment, we can come to Him confident that He will forgive us. His forgiveness has no boundaries or conditions. He forgave those that crucified Him, and He forgives us today.
2. **Gift/Prayer #2: Lord, reveal yourself to me.** In [John 20:11-18](#), Mary is desperate to find Jesus. She thinks she is searching for his dead body. She even asks the gardener to please tell her where Jesus’ body has been moved. And the “gardener” answers her request by revealing that He *is* the resurrected Jesus. No one has moved His dead body. He is standing right in front of her alive. Mary’s eyes and heart are opened, and God is revealed to her. And in this answer to her request, she now understands that her Lord has conquered death, and has made a way for all believers. This gift/prayer is a prayer that those who are struggling with faith can use in their doubts, and also a prayer for those who have walked many years with God and desire to see Him afresh. Like Mary, we can all request that God opens our hearts and eyes so we too can see and encounter the resurrected Christ in His glory.
3. **Gift/Prayer #3: Lord, take charge of my life.** In [Mark 16:9](#), Mark provides background to the reason Mary Magdalene loved Jesus so fully. Jesus had healed her from seven demons! In [Luke 4:18](#) Jesus proclaims that He has come to release the captives. Mary was a personal witness to the life-changing healing that God can provide when we give our lives to Him. Evil cannot stand before Him. He changes us completely, and He frees us from oppression. This prayer has the power to flip our life’s trajectory upside down. He did that for Mary. And He still does this for those that ask.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - God is inviting us through this first Easter encounter to be seeking our own encounters with Him. Stand at the empty tomb with Mary and hear as Jesus reveals Himself to her simply by calling her name. We, too, can listen for Jesus’ voice, and like Mary, we will recognize when He calls ([John 10:27](#)). Have you heard God’s voice recently, and if so, what was your response?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - When God so graciously answers these three prayers, we receive the Easter gifts of the resurrection: freedom from punishment, shame, and guilt, eyes and hearts that see God in afresh, and the life-changing hope, mercy, and love that comes when we ask God to take charge of our lives. How has God revealed Himself to you in the past? Which of these gifts/prayers do you most need right now?
- 3) **DO** - In His resurrection, Jesus adopted us into His family with God as our Father. This week take a moment daily to lift the Easter prayer to God: *“Jesus, my heart is open to encountering You afresh. I believe that through Your resurrection, You destroyed the power of punishment of permanent death once and for all. I accept Your everlasting grace, forgiveness, and Lordship over my life and destiny forever. Amen!”* Join us next Sunday for our new series, “Should I?”, beginning with how to engage our grief.