

Upon my bed at night

*I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him, but found him not;
I called him, but he gave no answer.*

² *'I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek him whom my soul loves.'*

I sought him, but found him not.

³ *The sentinels found me,
as they went about in the city.*

'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'

⁴ *Scarcely had I passed them,
when I found him whom my soul loves.*

*I held him, and would not let him go
until I brought him into my mother's house,
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

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*As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.*

² *My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.*

*When shall I come and behold
the face of God?*

³ *My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'*

⁴ *These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.*

⁵ *Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help⁶ and my God.*

*My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,*

from Mount Mizar.

⁷ Deep calls to deep

*at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.*

⁸ By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

⁹ I say to God, my rock,
'Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?'
¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying,

one at the head and the other at the feet.¹³ They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.¹⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher).¹⁷ Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to 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’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Prayer: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

All of the Gospels mention that Mary Magdalene witnessed Jesus' crucifixion and burial. She was someone who loved The Lord Jesus so much and was so grateful to Him for all that He had done for her that she was determined to be with Him through thick and through thin. Like the beloved in the Song of Songs longing to be with her lover and like the deer longing for thirst quenching cold clear water, Mary longed to be with Jesus. Mary had been blessed and healed by Jesus and that had left her with a deep gratitude to her Saviour. She was a Jewish woman from the fishing town of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus had travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, there had been twelve special disciples who went with him and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary Magdalene was one of those women and we are told that Jesus had delivered her from seven demons. So we can see why she had such a deep thankfulness in her heart towards Jesus. He must have seen Mary in her distress and desperation and at the same time seen who she was meant to be and how she needed to be set free. With a deep care and compassion He liberated her.

That Mary was set free from demons is clearly stated in the Bible, but contrary to some peoples beliefs there is no Biblical evidence that she was a prostitute or had an immoral past. There are many Marys in the Bible and it is important to not confuse them or muddle them up. The Mary who was a prostitute and cleansed Jesus' feet is not shown to be the same one as Mary Magdalene. As said, we do know that Mary Magdalene travelled with Jesus along with other women; two of those mentioned in the Gospels are Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household and Susanna. These women we are told supported Jesus and the twelve out of their own means. Their resources thus provided a vital part of the provision that was needed for Jesus' ministry. So it is possible that Mary Magdalene was a wealthy woman just as Joanna must have been.

We are told that Mary stayed after the crucifixion to watch Jesus' burial, and so she knew the exact location of where Jesus had been laid to rest. Today's Gospel tells us that she was able to retrace her steps after the Sabbath back to the tomb. Our reading says:

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed" Mary ran and told Simon Peter and John who came and saw the empty tomb for themselves. Then after they had left, through her tears Mary saw the angels who said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." After that she turned round and without recognising Him she saw Jesus who also said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?" Supposing Jesus to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." It was then that Jesus said, "Mary!" At that moment Mary knew that it was not a gardener speaking with her but Jesus, her Lord and teacher, and she turned and said to Jesus, "Rabbouni!" Tears of grief gave way to amazement and joy. Mary had felt devastated, alone, hopeless and desperate. But now she had her teacher and shepherd restored to her.

We can learn a lot from Mary Magdalene:

The Lord has done so much for us that we cannot but be grateful to Him just like Mary was. Like her it is right for us to want to be with Jesus, and like Mary we too can be refreshed by God's love and presence with us.

We too may have opportunities to help Jesus with His ministry on earth and give of our wealth to support what He is doing. To give to charities that are helping those less fortunate than we are.

Mary over the centuries has been labelled by some as a prostitute. We may be misunderstood and falsely accused of all sorts of things as we seek to love and follow Christ. What is important is not any false ideas that others have about us, but only the good that Jesus sees in us, the new creations that we are in Christ and who we are increasingly becoming by the love and grace of God.

Mary was set free from an oppressive past; by Jesus we too have been loved, forgiven and liberated from all that would pull us down and away from God and His love for us.

Mary was present at the crucifixion and saw what Jesus was prepared to do for her, to even die on the cross for her. We can also take time to contemplate Christ's sacrifice in our place on the cross in order for us to be forgiven. We can meditate on and be sure that Jesus truly died for us and rose for us.

Jesus was alive for Mary and Jesus is alive for us today. When we feel devastated, alone, hopeless and desperate like Mary did, we can be sure that we like her have Jesus our 'Rabbouni' – our teacher and our good shepherd with us to help us in every situation and circumstance.

"Jesus is never further away than a prayer".