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RISEN INDEED !

Jesus is alive. Eyewitness testimony establishes it beyond question. It all happened in that rollercoaster of emotions, Holy Week. It's a lot like what you go through in the loss of a loved one. All seems fine, then unbelievable things begin to happen. It all goes wrong so fast. You're left to pick up the pieces of life.

In one week, Jesus was acclaimed by crowds as King of Israel, betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, judged by Caiaphas, delivered by Pilate. Crucified, dead, buried. Should be end of the story. But it's not. You're the next page. John said he wrote his gospel, corroborating truthful eyewitness testimony, so YOU will also believe - and by believing, have eternal life through Jesus Christ, the RISEN Lord and Savior.

Because on Easter Sunday, all the bad news of Good Friday combines with the good news of Christmas to become the best news ever. Jesus said "*it is finished.*" God stamps "*paid in full*" across the debt of sin, nailing it to the cross. Just the beginning of transformed lives for all who trust in Christ.

In John 20, no one expected resurrection. They had seen Jesus dead and buried, in a rush and a blur. Soon as possible after the Sabbath, women come to His tomb, to finish His hurried burial. Let's view this encounter through the perspective of Mary Magdalene - and discover three amazing things:

1- HIS TOMB IS EMPTY. Seeing the stone rolled away, Mary runs to tell Peter and John. "*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid Him.*" The last-minute plan on Friday must have changed. The men run to see. Yes, the gravecloths are there and the headcloth is neatly folded. The body was not stolen. But it's gone.

Verse 9 says "*they did not yet understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead.*" They believed what they saw. They're not inventing a story. It's all happening to them. Puzzling. Extraordinary. But the empty tomb is just part of the world-changing news of Easter "resurrection day." Mary stays at the tomb.

"*Why are you weeping?*" asks the angel. Appropriate if Jesus was there. But an empty tomb is nothing to cry about. In her grief, Mary sees things differently. She was "*last at the cross and first at the grave.*" Not a greater sinner than you, but perhaps she better appreciated her salvation. She deeply loves Jesus, the man who cast out seven demons, giving her life back. Soon He will give her new spiritual life too.

2- JESUS IS ALIVE. She thinks the man speaking is the gardener. Then he says one word which erases all her confusion and grief. Her name. Instantly she recognizes His voice! She's one of the John 10 sheep who knows the voice of the Good Shepherd. It's Jesus - *He's alive!* How can this be? So many questions!

Jesus says, "*Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father.*" His resurrection body is real, but more than material. Now He eases what could be false joy midst her grief. Reality check. Like the turning point in grief when you realize the loved one is truly gone. Things will never be like they were.

3- EVERYTHING CHANGES. "Yes, Mary, it's Me. I'm alive and real. But stop hanging on for dear life to My physical presence. The relationship we had before, teacher and learner, disciple and master, it's all changed now. Resurrection takes everything to a new level. You're going to live with a new reality."

And a new mission: "*Go tell My brothers I have risen, and am ascending to My Father and your Father, My God and your God.*" Jesus was a man, but also naturally the Son of God. We become the adopted children of God when we are 'born again' spiritually. Believers are "*in union with Christ*" through His spiritual presence. Three amazing things happen to all who believe, so you never fear death:

- 1- Just like the empty tomb, you were once "dead in sins" but have been made alive together with Him.
- 2- Just like Jesus is alive, those who believe in Him are spiritually alive, as His life now lives through you.
- 3- His spiritual life changes everything. You now have His new life power, and His new life purpose.

In v18, Mary shows the way: Trust and obey. She "*went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord' and told them all He said.*" Of course they are incredulous, until they also believe. Jesus didn't tell her to convert them or convince them. The Holy Spirit does that. Your new mission: TELL the good news. Show your changed life, and tell them WHO changed you - *the living RISEN Lord Jesus!*