

Digging Deeper: The Greater Meaning of John 20:18

Thursday, October 8, 2026

“Mary Magdalene came and brought the news to the disciples: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what he had said to her.” (John 20:18)

Early on Nisan 16, Mary Magdalene found Jesus' tomb empty, and after Peter and John went home, she stayed behind, weeping. The main point is that Jesus noticed this loyal woman's tears, comforted her personally, and then trusted her with a wonderful assignment: to tell his brothers that he had been raised. The day's text reminds us that Jesus sees our pain, and that one of the best ways he comforts us is by giving us something meaningful to do for him.

1 “Weeping”: Tears Jesus Noticed (κλαίω, *klaio*)

The Greek word κλαίω (*klaio*) means to weep or cry, and the study note on John 11:33 explains that it often refers to weeping out loud. John says Mary “kept standing outside near the tomb, weeping.” (John 20:11) This was not a few quiet tears. Her heart was broken because she thought someone had taken her Lord’s body away.

Mary had good reason to love Jesus. He had freed her from “seven demons.” (Luke 8:2) Now, when she felt most alone, Jesus was watching, and he was moved by her grief. David once wrote to Jehovah: “Do collect my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not recorded in your book?” (Psalm 56:8)

- Jehovah and Jesus do not overlook our tears. They see them, and they care.

2 “Rabboni”: He Called Her by Name (ῥαββουνί, *rhabbouni*)

Jesus asked Mary why she was weeping, but she thought he was the gardener. Then he said one word: “Mary!” Right away she answered: “Rab·bo’ni!” (*which means “Teacher!”*) (John 20:15, 16) The NWT study note explains that ῥαββουνί (*rhabbouni*) is a Semitic word meaning “My Teacher,” a warm and respectful way to speak to him.

Jesus had said about himself as the Fine Shepherd: “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” (John 10:3) Hearing her own name in his familiar voice was all it took. Her sadness turned to joy because she knew he was alive and that he still knew her personally.

- Jesus knows each of his sheep by name, and that includes you.

3 “Brought the News”: From Mourner to Messenger (ἀγγέλλω, *angelo*)

The word behind “brought the news” is ἀγγέλλω (*angelo*). It means to announce or to deliver a message, and it comes from the same family as ἄγγελος (*angelos*), “messenger” or “angel.” Just minutes earlier, two angels had spoken to Mary at the tomb. (John 20:12, 13) Now Jesus made Mary a messenger herself, saying: “Go to my brothers and say to them.” (John 20:17)

Mary went from weeping at a tomb to announcing the best news in the world: “I have seen the Lord!” Long before, a psalm had said: “Jehovah gives the command; the women proclaiming the good news are a large army.” (Psalm 68:11) Je-

sus' simple assignment gave Mary purpose and joy right when she needed it most.

- Sharing the good news can lift our own spirits, even when we are hurting.

Key Spiritual Reflections

- **Being Seen:** When I feel sad or alone, do I remember that Jesus and Jehovah notice my tears, just as Jesus noticed Mary's?
(John 20:11; Psalm 56:8)
- **Being Known:** How does it help me to know that Jesus, the Fine Shepherd, knows me by name?
(John 10:3)

- **Being Used:** When I am discouraged, could sharing the good news or helping someone else in the congregation be the very thing that encourages me? (John 20:17, 18)