

# Jesus Brings Hope

*Mary stood crying outside the tomb .... Then she turned round and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus ... She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!"*  
John's Gospel chapter 20, verses 11–16 (part)

## TEARS OF HOPELESSNESS?

It's scary to be completely lost but that's how Mary was. Nothing fitted – it was like a terrifying nightmare only she knew she was awake. When Jesus was killed her world fell apart. Because it was Jesus who had rescued her from confusion and helped her discover her humanity. He had become her world – the one through whom and with whom she made her way in life. Bereaved and utterly bereft.

But when he was buried at least she knew where his body was and could embalm it – along with the other women. Now even that last signpost to sanity had been stolen. Unless you have felt this lost and helpless, messed up and rejected as Mary did, you'll find it hard to imagine how she could miss out on Jesus. But if you've been there or are there – amazingly there can still be hope.

## NO EASY HOPE

Sceptics often think that Christians talk themselves into believing the impossible – that Jesus was raised to life after the awfulness of crucifixion. Surely that is the only possible explanation?

What this account, and several others, indicate is that the first Christians could believe almost anything other than the facts – to start with that is. Mary's mind discerned a man – logically the most likely person at this time of morning in a garden is the gardener. But logic does not take precedent over history. In the end she recognizes that it is Jesus – but it takes something special to convince her – Jesus himself. Nothing else would work. It was the same with many of the others too.

Never let anyone undermine your hope – founded as it is on Jesus' resurrection. Nothing else explains the facts of history or your own faith.

## THE HOPE LINE!

The human voice is amazing. The phone rings and as we answer it someone speaks. Immediately we know who it is. So when Jesus called 'Mary' his voice broke through her fog of bewilderment and the tears of grief and isolation.

Was it the warm, compassionate and loving tone? Was it some special inflection in the way Jesus spoke, 'Mary'? Was it the questioning hidden there – don't you get it yet – kind of thing? Whatever, we do know it changed everything for Mary. Jesus was so special she wanted to hang on to him, to stay there for ever, to keep him for herself.

But no – Jesus wants others to know he's alive and they could meet him and find their hopelessness transformed too. So, like Mary, once we have heard him call us – we need to go. Our hope must be shared.

*Lord God – Thank you that when Jesus was raised from death he put your big hope back in people's lives. Through your Holy Spirit help me live that hope everyday. Amen.*

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*God ... gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from the death. This fills us with living hope, and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people.*

*Peter's first Letter chapter 1: 3–4 (part)*

## THE HOPE OF NEW LIFE

By the time Jesus was dead – crucified on Good Friday, Peter, the leading disciple was completely desperate. There was no hope to be found anywhere – the world was deeply dark. Not only was Jesus his friend, mentor and hero brutally murdered, Peter had failed him utterly by denying he knew him. He had been too scared to own up. There was nothing left to live for!

So, when eventually he came to accept that Jesus was alive again and after Jesus had assured him that his denial no longer mattered, it felt as though God had brought him back from the brink of death too. The resurrection of Jesus was for Peter a deep experience of God's mercy – total and unwarranted forgiveness as well as the gift of a new life. That is how becoming a Christian can also seem for us. It's wonderful.

## FULL OF A LIVING HOPE

It was now many years ago that Peter met with the risen Jesus. Eventually these physical encounters with Jesus stopped – but not the hope that came with them! That's one reason why he talked about a 'living hope'. The hope was still there because he knew Jesus was still alive and moreover this hope shaped everyday he lived.

The resurrection of Jesus gives to all his followers a completely new perspective on life. It fills us with hope. For ourselves that we are loved by God so he won't ever let us go or go back to the way life was without him. For other people that there is no one who cannot be reached and changed by God's love. For our world that there is nothing too big for God to rescue and transform. So let's get living.

## A HOPE TO DIE FOR!

At any time, as a Christian, Peter knew he might be killed and life was extremely edgy for those he wrote to as well! People who have faced sudden death and survived often speak about seeing things with amazing clarity. Peter did too!

Because of Jesus, Peter knew that all Christians are welcomed into a great treasure house when they die – the blessings that God keeps for his people. No more suffering or anxiety. No more struggling with the dark side of our nature. No more confusion and compromise. No more evil. Rather a fantastic life with God, full of colour and beauty, vibrant praise and exciting relationships with other people. It will be like the most loving welcome we can possibly imagine but far better. Perhaps best of all, we shall be as alive and holy as Jesus is. Fantastic and true!

*Lord God – Thank you that when Jesus was raised from death he put your big hope back in people's lives. Through your Holy Spirit help me live that hope everyday. Amen.*