

Sermon Title: **Mary Magdalene, the Rescued Sinner**

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Scripture Reference: **John 20:1-18**

Thesis: **Mary Magdalene was rescued from demon possession to become a faithful follower of Jesus;**

Purpose: **Mary's commitment to Jesus is a great example for us to learn what it means to be a committed follower of Christ.**

Key Word: "commitment"

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **John 20:1-18**

A) The Setting:

- 1) **Have you ever been misunderstood or misrepresented?**
 - (a) People think you are something that just isn't true?
 - (b) That is the case for our next study of Women of the Bible, Mary Magdalene.
- 2) **Perhaps she has been the most misrepresented and maligned person in the Bible.**
 - (a) Down through the centuries she has been accused of many things not true and our century is no exception.
 - (b) **So, let's begin by stating what Mary Magdalene is not.**
 - (i) First of all, she was not a prostitute.
 - (ii) She was not married to Jesus.
 - (iii) Mary did not have an illegitimate daughter of Jesus.
- 3) **Her name really means "Mary of Magdalene or Magdala in some manuscripts"**
 - (a) Which represents her hometown, a village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
 - (b) She was a leading figure among those attracted to Jesus.
 - (c) In the Gospels, more was written about Mary Magdalene than any other women except for Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- 4) **She was a prominent figure especially in the days of Jesus Crucifixion, burial and resurrection.**
 - (a) We have often used her encounter in today's text for an Easter message;
 - (b) But, I have never really focused on her as the subject of the message.
 - (c) Something, I hope to rectify this morning and I think you will find that she is worthy of our study.
- 5) **In the text, I have chosen for us to look at, we will witness Mary's encounter with Jesus after His resurrection.**
 - (a) Mary was the first person that Jesus chose to appear to after the resurrection.
 - (b) Ask yourself as we look at this, why would Jesus appear to her as the first one?
 - (c) What is her role and contribution to the Bible?
- 6) **Let's see for ourselves turning in our scripture reading in the Gospel of John 20:1-18.**

A) Sermon Prayer

B) (The Hook)

- 1) **On April 21st, in the year 1519, the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez sailed into the harbor of Vera Cruz, Mexico.¹**
 - (a) He brought with him only about 600 men, and yet over the next two years his vastly outnumbered forces were able to defeat Montezuma and all the warriors of the Aztec empire, making Cortez the conqueror of all Mexico.
 - (b) How was this incredible feat accomplished, when two prior expeditions had failed even to establish a colony on Mexican soil?
 - (c) **Here's the secret;**
 - (i) Cortez knew from the very beginning that he and his men faced incredible odds.
 - (ii) He knew that the road before them would be dangerous and difficult.

¹ From a Message entitled *Commitment* by Alan Perkins on Aug 19, 2001, sermoncentral.com

- (iii) He knew that his men would be tempted to abandon their quest and return to Spain.
- (d) **And so, as soon as Cortez and his men had come ashore and unloaded their provisions, he ordered their entire fleet of eleven ships destroyed.**
 - (i) His men stood on the shore and watched as their only possibility of retreat burned and sank.
 - (ii) And from that point on, they knew beyond any doubt there was no return, no turning back.
 - (iii) Nothing lay behind them but empty ocean.
 - (iv) Their only option was to go forward, to conquer or die.
- (e) **Cortez made sure his men were deeply committed to the task.**
- 2) **Today's passage shows the level of Mary Magdalene's devotion, commitment and dedication to Jesus.**
 - (a) Mary's commitment to Jesus is a great example for us to learn what it means to be a committed follower of Christ.
 - (b) We will see that Mary Magdalene was willing to risk everything to follow her Lord.

TS: **So, we begin seeing that . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Mary Magdalene was Freed by Jesus**

- 1) **There is no direct scripture that reveal the moments of Mary's First encounter with Jesus.**
 - (a) But, somewhere along the way we learn that when Jesus came across Mary of Magdala she was encountering Jesus while enslaved by 7 demonic spirits.
 - (b) **And Luke 8:2 says that Jesus healed several women all of whom were inflected with evil spirits and diseases listing:**
 - (i) Mary Magdalene, from whom seven spirits were removed.
 - (ii) Joanna, the wife of Cuza who was the manager of Herod's household.
 - (iii) Suzanna and many others.
- 2) **We are not told how the demons came to have this grip on them.²**
 - (a) It is clear from scripture that those who engage in occult practices are particularly vulnerable.
 - (b) However, we are not told whether some choice of the person involved is necessary before demons can gain access.
- 3) **Possibly the most suggestive New Testament passages on this theme are in Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 11:24-26.**
 - (a) Each records Jesus' warning about unclean or evil spirits.
 - (b) Jesus spoke of such a spirit going out of a man and then returning to find his life "empty, swept, and put in order" (Matthew 12:44)
 - (c) The evil spirit then enters with "seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter and dwell there.
- 4) **The key words in Matthew 12:45, are "empty, swept. And put in order."**
 - (a) The individual described has done his best to put his life in order, but he himself is empty.
 - (b) We are made with a spiritual component to our existence.
 - (c) It is the spiritual component that will one day either reside with Jesus or be eternally separated from Him.
 - (d) **The difference is whether one has invited Jesus to take up residence as the Holy Spirit or if they have allowed other spirits to enter.**
- 5) **One thing I can guarantee, is that those who have the Holy Spirit living in them cannot be taken over by an evil spirit.**
 - (a) In the example given here the individual is empty, has not invited Jesus into their heart to fill this spiritual void.

² Every Woman in the Bible by Sue and Larry Richards, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, TN. 1999 (p.185)

- (b) While they have done their personal best to put their house in order they are vulnerable to other spiritual beings because they are doing it in their own strength.
- 6) **However, Mary got into this state,**
 - (a) Her encounter of Jesus resulted in her being freed from their power and influence over her life.
 - (b) She was able to remain that way because she committed herself to staying close to Jesus.

TS: **Next, we see that . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **Mary Magdalene Helped Support Jesus' Ministry**

- 1) **Mary must have been a woman of some means and importance.**
 - (a) We learned that as this Mary traveled with Jesus and His disciples she helped to provide for and support the ministry.
 - (b) Jesus and His twelve disciples had all left their primary occupations to follow Jesus in ministry.
 - (c) Luke tells us that it was primarily women who provided funds to buy food and other necessities.
 - (d) Early Jewish literature makes it clear that well-to-do women were frequent contributors to well-known rabbis and their students.
- 2) **When the Jewish religious leaders were threatening to expel any of Jesus followers we see that this Mary did not seem afraid to be associated with Jesus.**
 - (a) She was at the cross with John and Mary, the mother of Jesus.
 - (b) She watched until the body was taken down and laid to rest.
 - (c) She watched from a distance at the sight of the tomb.
 - (d) She was up before daylight on Sunday Morning headed with others to the tombs.
- 3) **Her ability to help support and her faithfulness lead us to believe that she was confident enough that she could survive even if cut off from the Synagogue for assistance.**
 - (a) Mary was clearly a leader among the women followers of Jesus.
 - (b) And while I would not say this, some have gone so far to as to call her an Apostle.

TS: **Finally, . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **Mary Magdalene was Committed to Jesus**

- 1) **As I have already pointed out that this Mary was committed to Jesus.**
 - (a) First of all, I think she was so committed because she had experienced a life changing event.
 - (b) Mary was committed to Jesus because she did not want to go back to her old life.
 - (c) She had been set free and wanted to remain that way.
- 2) **Even in the pain of watching Jesus' cruel torture and death it did not keep her away.**
 - (a) When all the disciples scattered except for John, she remained comforting Jesus' mother.
 - (b) Even after His death, she stayed and watched until the body was taken down and placed in the tomb.
- 3) **What must have seemed like the end of all hope with the death and burial of Jesus' body;**
 - (a) Still Mary watched the tomb to make sure no one disturbed the body.
 - (b) And when she arrived early on Sunday morning to finish properly preparing Jesus' body for burial and she found the tomb was open.
- 4) **Mary began to inquire where they had taken Jesus.**
 - (a) Other gospels tell us that two angels appeared and told her Jesus was no longer in the tomb.
 - (b) She ran to tell the other apostles.

- 5) **When Peter and John heard the news, they did not believe her and ran back to the tomb with Mary not far behind.**
 - (a) They arrived and found the grave clothes but no sign of the body.
 - (b) They were perplexed; believing someone had taken the body and left.
- 6) **At this point, I don't think Mary believed that Jesus had risen.**
 - (a) I am not sure that she realized that she had been met by angels.
 - (b) Because after Peter and John had left, all alone, she stayed and began to weep.
- 7) **Two angels again appear one sitting at the head and the other at the feet where Jesus had lain asking Mary, "Whom do you seek?"**
 - (a) She is in tears and does not realize who is there stating through her sobs, "**They have taken my Lord and I don't know where to find Him.**"
 - (b) Jesus is always attracted to our weakness and so he comes appearing first to Mary; but she does not realize that he is standing there until he calls her by name, "**Mary.**"
- 8) **Mary has been the most faithful one committed to waiting in her grief.**
 - (a) It must have been overwhelming as she had lost touch with the one who had saved her from her tortures at the hands of demons.
 - (b) I picture her collapsing at the feet of Jesus wrapping her arms around his legs.
 - (c) **Not wanted to ever let go again.**
 - (d) And yet; Jesus tells her she must stop clinging to Him
 - (e) Jesus gave her a message to give to the rest of the disciples.
- 9) **She hurried once again as fast as she could; Mary bursts in crying out, "I have seen the Lord!"**
 - (a) Mary Magdalene, the women who had once been possessed by demons got to be the first one to share the Gospel, the Good News that we serve a risen Savior!
 - (b) Jesus is alive!

TS: **So, what is Mary Magdalene to us today?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

- A) **First of all, she is an example of the kind of commitment we need once we follow the Lord.**
 - 1) Mary recognized that she needed to be near Jesus.
 - 2) We too, need to stay near Jesus lest we wander off into dangerous pastures.
 - 3) **Too many Christians, say "there I am saved by Jesus" and then continue to do their own thing failing to realize that now we belong to Jesus.**
 - 4) We should be consulting Jesus for His leading and direction in our life.
 - 5) **You may not think He cares?**
 - (a) But Jesus does and when we let Him lead, He will guide us down the right path.
 - (b) We need to realize that we need the help of Jesus and we need to take our prayer time seriously.
 - 6) **Whom do you seek?**
 - (a) Jesus says you will find me when you seek me with all your heart, mind and soul.
 - (b) Mary loved Jesus with a passion we seldom see.
 - (c) I think this is why Jesus decided to come and appear to her before anyone else.
- B) **Don't you think it is fascinating that Jesus chose Mary to deliver His message.**
 - 1) Not one of the Apostles, Not a priest or religious leader.
 - 2) But just a woman who had committed her whole being to Him.
 - 3) **Jesus often chooses the most unlikely, to do His will . . . why?**
 - (a) Because of Love and commitment?
 - (b) Because when Jesus uses common everyday folk, He is glorified.
 - 4) Who knows, Jesus might even choose you or I if we have that kind of commitment?

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**