

Easter Sunday

[Acts 10.34-43](#)

[1 Corinthians 15.19-26](#)

[John 20.1-18](#)

Ever rushed in somewhere and jumped to the totally wrong conclusion?
Has it then been quite difficult to get you to realise you were wrong and to see things differently?

I find if I'm distressed, maybe afraid or upset, this is even more likely to happen. There was a bit of an odd man who befriended us when we lived in China. He looked wild and unkempt and he had a speech impediment. I jumped to the wrong conclusion with him because he started ringing me every day and then I saw him outside our apartment complex.

I felt pretty vulnerable with two little blond girls, in a foreign country, understanding little of the language, and with Mike at work all day. And now I had this odd guy ringing and hanging around. I concluded he was a creepy stalker and I really felt threatened. Finally, the poor man found someone to translate for him. What he wanted was to invite us to his place for a cup of tea. He was a very poor man so his place was just a tiny storage shed but he borrowed some plastic stools and a thermos from the shop nearby and he had organised for a translator to meet us there so we could sit outside his shed, drink tea and converse.

Our thoughts can really lead us astray sometimes. They sound so utterly reasonable, particularly when we get time to ruminate on them alone. Before long we are quite sure that they are true and we take some persuading to agree we were wrong.

Initially John 20 is characterised by lots of distress, with people running here and there, weeping. Mary runs, the disciples run. Then the disciples go again and Mary weeps apparently alone. In her rushing and weeping, Mary leaps to the conclusion that someone has taken Jesus' body. Her conclusion is arguably quite reasonable. The body is not there. Therefore, someone must have taken it.

But she holds surprisingly stubbornly to this belief. She repeats it three times. First to the disciples in verse two: *'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.'*

Fair enough, I guess. But then in verse 13, Mary has an encounter with angels and she still holds tenaciously to her wrong conclusion. Again, she says, this time to the angels: *'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'* The only change in her statement is that she now seems to be by herself. And there is nothing like being alone for ruminating in wrong directions.

Mary then has an encounter with her risen Lord and her erroneous conclusion still stands. Instead of seeing Jesus, she sees someone who could, in her mind, potentially have carried out her erroneous idea. So rather than being dissuaded, she adds legs to her wrong conclusion. Verse 15: '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."

Why can't she see that she is wrong?



Verse 14 is curious.

¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

The Bible repeatedly says that people won't recognise Jesus. He won't look like what they think he should look like. He won't do what they think he should be doing. And he won't say the sorts of things they think

he should be saying. Mary looks Jesus in the face but she doesn't see him. Instead, she sees the gardener. In other words, she sees what her wrong thinking leads her to see.

There's a cautionary tale here because we are no different. There are going to be times, particularly bad times, when we'll be looking Jesus straight in the face and we'll think it's the gardener, because we've jumped to the wrong conclusion about what Jesus is going to be, do and say in the situation in which we find ourselves.

Both the angels and Jesus ask Mary, '*Woman, why are you weeping?*'

Sometimes the only reason we are weeping is because we have leapt to the wrong conclusion. But other times we have every reason to weep because maybe life has dealt us a terrible blow and weeping is the only reasonable response.

Immediately after asking '*Why are you weeping?*', Jesus adds another question: '*Who are you looking for?*'

Who are you looking for? This is a great question for us to take into whatever situation we are facing. Like Mary, we are looking for Jesus. Unlike Mary, we know Jesus is alive. We know there is light in the darkness and hope in the most desperate of situations. In the midst of our weeping and distress, Jesus is the one we should be looking for. He is going to be there. We are post-resurrection people. We know he lives. This is our hope

Mary recognises Jesus when he calls her by name. Mary! It reminds me of that old song: 'He knows my name ... he sees each tear that falls, and hears me when I call.' Except here it is Jesus who calls.

As you look for Jesus in whatever dark place you may be walking through, you can be sure that Jesus is there, alive, present and furthermore he is calling your name.

Who is Mary when she leaves the garden after this encounter? There is no more weeping. Of course, there's no more weeping. There is also no doubt and no firmly held wrong conclusions.

She goes to the disciples with confidence and announces, *'I have seen the Lord.'*

The resurrection is the key to our hope. We are post-resurrection people. We stand in the presence of the risen King. Let's make sure that's who we see. Let's listen for his voice calling our name. And may our witness be: I have seen the Lord.

