

**Easter Service  
John 20:1-18**

**Good Shepherd, 2023**

Have you ever driven through a long, dark tunnel? It can be scary as you leave the sunlight and enter the darkness of the dimly lit tunnel. You are happy to see the light ahead of you and then – you find yourself in the bright sunshine again!

The Lenten season is like that tunnel experience. For six weeks we have traveled with our Lord Jesus and it has been a solemn trip. This season of the Church Year draws our attention to the ugliness of our sins and what Jesus had to endure to make us beautiful in God's sight.

But today it's different. Today we drive out of the dark Lenten tunnel into the glorious light of another Easter Sunday. As we do, we thank God that

**JESUS IS THE LIGHT AFTER THE LONG, DARK TUNNEL.**

THE DARK NIGHT

That first Easter Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb while it was still dark. Anyone who has had a loved one die knows how she must have felt. But Mary's darkness went deeper than that. Jesus had cured Mary when He cast seven devils out of her. From that time on, Mary had followed Jesus with a heart of faith in Him as her Savior. Not only was the sky over Calvary pitch black as she stood below the cross, so was her heart. Not only was the tomb, into which the body of Jesus was placed, devoid of light, so was Mary's spirit.

Mary was in a dark tunnel without any light. That is why the tears came as she stood by the open tomb. Not only was her Savior dead, but she thought someone had taken Jesus'

body! Mary stood there while it was dark, not only in the sky above her, but also in her soul.

We know that feeling:

- Have you cried at the death of a loved one?
- Have you struggled with problems in your life?
- Do you worry about your health, your job, your family?
- Do you despair because your sins bother you?
- Do your temptations seem too impossible to resist?

Then stick around. Listen and learn as we follow Mary Magdalene from the dark night into the gray dawn.

THE GRAY DAWN

Darkness has to finally give way to the coming of dawn. The bleakness of the night gives way to the glorious light of day. It happens every day. In the first glimmer of light the day after the Sabbath, Mary could see that the stone was rolled away from the tomb of Jesus.

Mary knew that the disciples would not steal the Lord's body from the tomb. The disciples were too paralyzed by fear to do such a thing. No one would believe that story!

Mary knew that the enemies of Jesus would not steal the body, they wanted Jesus to stay in the tomb so that the people would forget about Him. That was why the Jewish religious leaders asked Pilate to post an around-the-clock guard at the tomb!

Dawn was coming! The Easter light was beginning to shine in some grief-darkened souls. Some of the women claimed to have seen the risen Lord. Peter and John saw the empty tomb. There were reports that angels had said that Jesus had risen! Easter light was starting to shine.

Stick around! Listen and learn as we follow Mary from the gray dawn into Easter morning's glorious light!

### THE GLORIOUS LIGHT

Dawn doesn't last long. It's only a short time between night and day. So also that first Easter Sunday. When the Son (Jesus) arose from the dead, the earth shone in glorious light. In the dawn Mary had seen the stone rolled away and had run back to report her fears to the disciples. Then Mary returned to the tomb and was crying. Mary looked into the tomb and saw angels who asked, Why are you crying? Mary replied, They have taken my Lord and I don't know where they have put Him.

Then it happened! As Mary was crying, she turned and noticed a man standing there. She didn't recognize Him but when He said, Mary, her heart knew. She saw Jesus. Her Lord had been dead, but now was alive! The darkness that had overwhelmed her soul simply vanished! There wasn't a dark tunnel anymore, it was now glorious Easter light.

What a day for the followers of Jesus! What joy the resurrection of Jesus brought them! No more would sin's guilt hammer their souls! The sins of the world had been placed on Jesus and He paid hell's punishment, and His resurrection proved that Jesus had paid for every sin!

By the raising of Jesus from the dead, the Father showed the world that Christ's payment for sin was complete. The Lord had descended into hell to knock the devil into the dust of defeat. Jesus entered His grave on Friday and left it on Easter to show us: because He lives, we also will live!

Because of that Easter light, there is a spring to our steps

today. Because of Easter we have hope for the future. As long as this world lasts, people like us, will rejoice in our risen Savior who said, I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Today we leave the dark tunnel of Lent for the glorious light of Easter. One day we will walk through the valley of the shadow of death. What a comfort it is to know that at the end of that valley, there stands the risen Savior, the One who brought His Light into our dark world of sin.

Christ is risen!      He is risen indeed!

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