

Introduction

- There's something about first thing in the morning, isn't there:
 - a peculiar stillness, especially if you are out before many others are up;
 - things look different, take on a different tone...
- What was going on that first Easter morning? Who was there? What was going on inside their heads?

WHO did Jesus Meet?

- **Mary Magdalene:**
 - clearly a **follower**, one of the inner group, willing to put her neck on the line by visiting the tomb;
 - a **healed demoniac** (Luke 8:2), who supported Jesus' ministry out of her own resources;
 - a **fearful woman** - possibly fearing that the benefits she had in Christ (freed from the demons), could disappear now that he is gone;
 - a **grieving, heart-broken, shattered woman**.
- Visit families at times of bereavement - especially in cases where the death has been sudden, often a disbelief, an inability to comprehend what has happened.
 - that's what Mary was like!

Who does Jesus meet Today?

- Normal folk, in their need.
- Not only in their "**Sunday best behaviour**"!
- But alongside them in the real situations facing them:
 - grief, illness, pain;
 - emotional hurt and trauma, the pain of relationship breakdown, of grudges held, of persecution;
 - the apparent meaninglessness of life, at times...
- Jesus met Mary of Magdala, as she really was that Sunday morning - pretenses down:
 - **he wants to meet you today - pretenses down.**

HOW did Jesus Meet Her?

He met her Gently

- Not pushing her too fast!
- Ever had the slightly peculiar appearance of **bumping into someone you used to know from years ago** on the street - maybe someone from school?
 - they recognise you, but you can't place them...!
 - **leaves you all at sea how to respond; embarrassed & awkward!**
 - wishing they'd give you some more clues as to who they are, and a bit of time to allow your brain to change gear!!
- **"Hi there Mary - its Jesus! Don't you recognise me! I've just risen from the dead!!"**
 - great news - but kinda hard to swallow!
- So Jesus allows it **dawn on her over time** - gently soothing her grief!
 - notice way he asks the questions - tone is somehow gentle.

He met her Personally

- Just one word that shattered and remade her world:
 - **"Mary"**
- Startlingly personal compared to anything else recorded, not just in Bible, but in just about all the literature of the ancient world!!

- Jesus still wants to meet us in the same ways today!

He meets us Gently

- Doesn't force his way in.
 - even when he has something hard to say to us or ask of us, he is gentle with us.

He meets us Personally

- Interested in you - not just in numbers, not just in the apparently successful, up-front Christians:
 - but in every Mary, and George, and Janette, and John, and Elizabeth and David, and
- Wants to know you **personally** - do you know him personally?
 - more than knowing who he is;
 - there are lots of people of whom I can truthfully say "I know who they are", but who I don't really know;
 - fewer who I actually know personally.
- Jesus wants to know us personally - and he does it gently.

WHY did Jesus Meet Her?

- Why bother with all these resurrection appearances?
- Could have left a note by the grave clothes:
 - *"Risen - tell the world! See you in heaven, love Jesus!"*
- But **he loved his friends**; **he loved Mary**; he wanted the best for them; and he actually wanted to be with them!
 - Jesus wanted to spend time with Mary; to see her again.

Today

- Loves us; wants to not just be known about, but known.

Conclusion

- What was all of this the culmination of?
 - God's plan to restore relationship with people, to save us.
- In Jesus God came to earth from heaven to rescue us, to meet with us.
- In the Resurrection he goes on being able to meet with us even today:
 - **lovingly**, as a friend, **personally**, **gently** - yet still challenging us and turning our worlds upside down.
- How will you respond to Jesus saying **your name**?
- How will you respond as he comes looking for you by name?
 - "go away"?, or
 - "my precious master"?