

John 20:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Analysis

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? The risen Christ initiates conversation with Mary Magdalene using tender pastoral questions. The Greek verb for "weepest" (*klaieis*, κλαίεις) describes audible weeping and mourning, not silent tears—Mary's grief was visible and vocal. Jesus's question **"whom seekest thou?"** (*tina zēteis*, τίνα ζητεῖς) echoes His first recorded words in John's Gospel: "What seek ye?" to John the Baptist's disciples (John 1:38). Throughout this Gospel, seeking represents spiritual quest and discipleship.

She, supposing him to be the gardener—the Greek *kēpouros* (κηπουρός) literally means "garden-keeper." Mary's assumption was logical given the tomb's garden location (John 19:41) and Jesus's simple appearance. Yet profound irony saturates this detail: Jesus IS the true Gardener who tends God's garden, the Second Adam restoring what the first Adam lost in Eden's garden. Mary seeks a corpse to anoint, but encounters the Living One. Her request—**"if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him"**—reveals both devotion (she'll carry the body alone despite its weight) and spiritual blindness. The very One she seeks stands before her, yet grief veils recognition. Until Christ reveals Himself, even proximity brings no knowledge.

Historical Context

This encounter occurred early Sunday morning in Joseph of Arimathea's private garden tomb (John 19:41-42), located near Golgotha outside Jerusalem's walls. First-century Jewish gardens often had caretakers who maintained plants, managed burials, and protected tombs from vandalism. Mary Magdalene's presence at dawn reflects both Jewish burial customs (women performed anointing) and the practical reality that Sabbath prohibitions had prevented proper preparation of Jesus's body.

Mary Magdalene holds unique prominence among Jesus's followers. Luke 8:2-3 identifies her as one from whom Jesus cast seven demons, and she became a devoted disciple who financially supported His ministry. All four Gospels place her at the crucifixion and resurrection, making her the first resurrection witness—remarkable in a culture where women's testimony held little legal weight. Early church tradition honored her as "apostle to the apostles."

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's gentle questioning of Mary model pastoral care for those experiencing profound grief?
2. What spiritual blindness might prevent you from recognizing Christ's presence in your circumstances?
3. Why is it significant that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene rather than to religious leaders or male disciples?

Interlinear Text

λέγει	αὐτὸν	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Γύναι	τίνα	κλαίεις	τίνα	
saith	him	G3588	Jesus	Woman	whom	weepest thou	whom	
G3004	G846		G2424	G1135	G5101	G2799	G5101	
ζητεῖς	ἐκείνη	δοκοῦσα	ὅτι	ὁ	κηπουρός	ἐστιν	λέγει	
seekest thou	She	supposing	G3754	G3588	the gardener	him to be	saith	
G2212	G1565	G1380			G2780	G2076	G3004	
αὐτὸν	Κύριε	εἰ	σὺ	ἐβάστασας	αὐτὸν	εἶπέ	μοι	ποῦ
him	Sir	if	thou	have borne	him	tell	me	where
G846	G2962	G1487	G4771	G941	G846	G2036	G3427	G4226
αὐτὸν	ἔθηκας	κάγὼ	αὐτὸν	ἄρῳ				
him	thou hast laid	and I	him	away				
G846	G5087	G2504	G846	G142				

Additional Cross-References

John 20:13 (Parallel theme): And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

John 18:7 (References Jesus): Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

Mark 16:6 (References Jesus): And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

Matthew 28:5 (References Jesus): And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

John 1:38 (References Jesus): Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

1 Samuel 1:16 (Parallel theme): Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Song of Solomon 3:2: I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

John 18:4 (References Jesus): Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

Luke 24:5 (Parallel theme): And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

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