

John 20:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Analysis

Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father—Jesus's words (mē mou haptou, μή μου ἅπτου) literally mean "stop clinging to me" (present imperative with negative particle), suggesting Mary had grasped Him. This isn't prohibition against touching (Thomas later touches, John 20:27) but against clinging to the pre-resurrection relationship. The reason clause—"**I am not yet ascended**"—indicates Jesus's ascension will complete His redemptive work, inaugurating a new mode of Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit. Mary must release physical presence to receive spiritual presence.

Go to my brethren—profoundly, Jesus calls the disciples "brethren" (adelphous, ἀδελφούς), not in John 15:15's "friends" sense but as family sharing His sonship. The message demonstrates new covenant reality: "**I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.**" Notice the careful distinction: "my Father AND your Father"—not "OUR Father"—preserving Christ's unique eternal sonship while granting believers adopted sonship through His redemptive work. Through Christ's death and resurrection, His Father becomes our Father; His God, our God. Mary becomes the first gospel preacher, commissioned to announce resurrection and the new family relationship it establishes.

Historical Context

Jesus's ascension, referenced here proleptically, occurred forty days after resurrection (Acts 1:3, 9-11). The ascension completed Christ's exaltation, positioning Him at the Father's right hand (Ephesians 1:20, Hebrews 1:3) where He intercedes for believers (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25) and from where He sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33). Early Christian theology, reflected in creeds, confessed both resurrection and ascension as essential to Christ's saving work.

Jesus's commission of Mary as first resurrection witness was culturally radical. Jewish law required two male witnesses for testimony validity (Deuteronomy 19:15), and rabbinic tradition questioned women's testimony. Yet God chose a woman—and one previously demon-possessed (Luke 8:2)—as the resurrection's first herald. This reflects the gospel's power to elevate the marginalized and God's delight in confounding worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's statement about "my Father and your Father" demonstrate the privilege and security of adoption into God's family?
2. What old ways of relating to Jesus might you be "clinging to" instead of embracing the Spirit-empowered relationship He offers?
3. How does Jesus commissioning Mary to announce His resurrection challenge cultural assumptions about who can bear witness to Christ?

Interlinear Text

λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Μὴ μου ἅπτου οὐπω γὰρ
saith **unto her** ^{G3588} **Jesus** **not** **me** **Touch** **not yet** **for**
G3004 G846 G2424 G3361 G3450 G680 G3768 G1063

Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς
I am **to** ^{G3588} **Father** **me** **go** **but** **to** ^{G3588}
G305 G4314 G3962 G3450 G4198 G1161 G4314

ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἶπὲ αὐτοῖς Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν
brethren **me** **and** **say** **unto her** **I am** **to** ^{G3588}
G80 G3450 G2532 G2036 G846 G305 G4314

πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν
Father **me** **and** **Father** **your** **and** **God** **me** **and** **God**
G3962 G3450 G2532 G3962 G5216 G2532 G2316 G3450 G2532 G2316

ὑμῶν
your
G5216

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:26 (References Jesus): For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

John 16:28 (Parallel theme): I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

1 Peter 1:3 (References Jesus): Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Psalms 68:18 (References God): Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

1 John 3:2 (References God): Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Romans 8:29 (Parallel theme): For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Matthew 12:50 (Parallel theme): For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew 28:7 (Parallel theme): And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

John 17:11 (Parallel theme): And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

John 17:25 (Parallel theme): O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.