

## **Theme: “Names of Wondrous Love” – THE LIGHT**

**Text: John 20:1-2, 11-18 (EHV)**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she left and ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,” she told them, “and we don’t know where they put him!”...

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent over, looking into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> She saw two angels in white clothes sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She told them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup> After she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will get him.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and replied in Aramaic, “*Rabboni!*” (which means, “Teacher”). <sup>17</sup> Jesus told her, “Do not continue to cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father—to my God and your God.’” <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” She also told them the things he said to her.

When I was in college a friend of mine and I decided we were going to take a bike ride on one of the converted railroad trails in the central part of Wisconsin. This particular trail we were going to ride on had a couple of old, long former train tunnels that you had to walk your bike through. One was ¼ mile long, the other was ¾ of a mile long. Now, to say our trip really wasn’t very thought out would be an understatement. We didn’t even remember to bring water with us (and the bike ride was around 20 miles long with quite a few hills). The other thing we didn’t think to bring (even though we knew we were going to be going through a tunnel that was almost a mile long) was a bike light, or a flashlight—any kind of light (this was also before we had cell phones so that light wasn’t an option either). If you’re wondering how dark a ¾ mile tunnel is (even the ¼ mile tunnel), it is VERY dark—like, can’t-even-see-the-people-who-are-walking-the-other-direction-past-you DARK!). The light at the other end of the tunnel is a small dot when you first enter, and since you have to walk your bike it felt like it took forever to finally get close enough to the end of the tunnel where it would shed some light on the path ahead of you, and then finally, out into the glorious sunlight pouring through the trees on that warm summer afternoon.

The season of Lent is something like travelling through a dark tunnel. During the weeks of this season the themes are often very somber, solemn, and serious. Even this Lenten season, though our focus has been on Jesus’ different “Names of Wondrous Love” in the Bible, we’ve also been reminded of our sins and the “darkness” Jesus had to endure and suffer in our place to remove those dark stains from our souls.

But today it’s all different. Today we walk out of the Lenten tunnel into the full sunshine, the glorious light of another Easter! For our joy, our comfort, our praise, today we look at one more “Name of Wondrous Love” for our Savior: **THE LIGHT**.

## 1. Darkness

That first Easter Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning **“while it was still dark” (v. 1)**, our text says. No doubt, for Mary this morning *felt* very “dark” as well. This wasn’t just a loved one she was going to mourn, this was her Savior buried in the darkness of that tomb! The One who had cast seven demons out of her (**Luke 8:2**) and rescued her life from torment. The One whom she served and followed with a heart full of faith that this man, Jesus, was more than just a man: He was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior. But now He was dead and buried, and all her hope was buried with Him. Imaging the darkness that Mary Magdalene felt in her heart that morning. And then when she arrives she finds the stone rolled away?! Imagine her despair and her confusion as she ran and told Peter and John, **“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,” she told them, “and we don’t know where they put him!” (v. 2).**

She had come to the tomb that morning hoping to embalm Jesus’ body, but now even this last labor of love was denied to her. And so her tears began to flow as she stood outside that empty tomb **“while it was still dark” (v. 1)**—both in the sky and in her heart that morning.

Can you relate to the darkness of Mary’s despair? Have you ever shed tears of sorrow at the grave of a loved one you miss dearly? Have you ever felt the darkness that this life so often brings? The struggles, burdens, and sorrows that can seem too much to bear? The worries and concerns we have about our health, our loved ones, our work, our future, our struggles with our sins and the temptations that never seem to let up. It can feel like we’re in a dark tunnel without any exit or daylight in sight. That’s what it felt like for Mary Magdalene that first Easter morning.

But that’s not how things ended for Mary that morning, and it’s not how things will end for us either. Let’s follow Mary from the **darkness** to the **dawn**.

## 2. Dawn

Every morning the darkness must give way to the dawn. It happened this morning, and it happened that first Easter morning. As the first light of day began to dawn, we also see light begin to dawn in Mary’s heart. Our text says, **As she wept, she bent over, looking into the tomb.<sup>12</sup> She saw two angels in white clothes sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet.<sup>13</sup> They asked her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (John 20:11-13).**

The presence of these angels and their question to Mary was meant to remind her of what she should have known: Jesus’ body wasn’t stolen, nor was He dead anymore! The angels had told this to the women who had gone into the tomb when Mary had run off to tell Peter and John, **[The angels] said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ ” And they remembered His words (Luke 24:5-8 NKJV).**

Like the first rays of light at dawn the angels’ presence and words brought a sliver of hope to Mary, and they reminded the other women of Jesus’ words and promises that He had spoken to them a number of times.

How often don’t we need those reminders of Jesus’ words and promises? That’s why we don’t just hear and remind ourselves of Jesus’ words and promises on Easter Sunday. We know and believe the forgiveness and eternal life we’ve been given in Jesus through His perfect life, death, and resurrection. But each week life often gets in the way. The distractions and disappointments that each day can bring can cause these promises and blessed truths to fade in our minds and hearts. That’s why we gather each week to be reminded once again that our Savior lives and reigns and is coming again to take us to be with Him forever in heaven. Each Sunday is a “mini-Easter,” a

reminder of Jesus' resurrection and His promises, like the rays of dawn's light breaking the darkness at the start of a new day.

The dawn doesn't last long, however. It's only a short period between night and light. It was the same on that first Easter day.

### 3. Daylight

In the dawn Mary had seen and heard the angels, but now in the daylight she sees her risen Savior Jesus! Our text tells us, **She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus.** <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, **"Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"** Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, **"Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will get him."** <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, **"Mary."** She turned and replied in Aramaic, **"Rabboni!"** (which means, "Teacher"). <sup>17</sup> Jesus told her, **"Do not continue to cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father—to my God and your God.'"** <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, **"I have seen the Lord!"** She also told them the things he said to her (John 20:14-18).

No more darkness for Mary! No more gloom and sadness. No more walking in the dark tunnel of despair. Jesus had risen! Her Savior lives! The darkness had been taken away at the rising of the S-O-N!

Again, think of how this relates to us: The S-O-N has risen for us, as well! He tells us, **"I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** (John 8:12 EHV). Think of what a perfect "Name of Wondrous Love" this is for Jesus: **THE LIGHT**. Think of what a great comparison **light** is to Jesus: Where there is light there cannot be darkness. When the sun rises and there is daylight, no matter how dark the night was, it is no longer dark. When you walk into a dark room, no matter how dark it is, when you turn on the lights it is no longer dark. That's what God did, in a sense, when He sent Jesus into this world. In first chapter of John's Gospel we read, **"In him [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of mankind."** <sup>5</sup> **The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."** (John 1:4-5 EHV). Where Jesus, **The Light** of the World is, there can be no darkness. Jesus overpowers it! Where Jesus is there is forgiveness, healing, and life!

Today we have left the dark tunnel of Lent for the glorious light of Easter. But as you and I know, there will be more "dark tunnels" that we must walk through in our lives, and in the end each one of us will walk the "dark tunnel" of death. What comfort to know that we have the **"Light of the World"** at the end of that dark tunnel: Our risen Savior Jesus! Because He lives, we will live also—forever with Him in heaven! Let's rejoice in that light this Easter Sunday and always, and let's share this **"Light of the World"** with the world! Amen.