

# She Saw Him First

*The Soul That Recognizes the Risen Christ*

Mary Magdalene did not see the risen Christ because she was the luckiest one in the garden. She saw it because love had opened her up in a way that made recognition possible. In Unity, we understand Easter not only as something that happened to Jesus, but as a possibility alive in every soul willing to remain open to it.

## Metaphysical Interpretation

The Disciples	Mary Magdalene
The reasoning mind Investigated, then left Needed proof to believe	The soul's devotion Remained present in grief Recognized new life

*"She stood outside the tomb weeping... she turned around and saw Jesus standing there." — John 20:11, 14*

## What Fear Sees / What Love Sees

Neuroscience documents what the mystics always knew: our inner state shapes what we can perceive. Fear triggers perceptual narrowing — the brain in survival mode sees only endings, only sealed tombs, only evidence of loss.

Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson's broaden-and-build research shows that love does the opposite: it widens the aperture, expanding our perceptual field so we can notice what is new, subtle, and alive. Meister Eckhart called this spiritual poverty — becoming empty of our own conclusions so we can receive what God is actually doing.

*"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." — Rumi*

Mary arrived at the tomb without judgment. She did not know what resurrection would look like — and because she had not decided the story was over, she could see when it continued. The tomb is not always where things end. Sometimes it is where things are about to begin.

Thich Nhat Hanh taught that nothing is ever truly lost — that the people and moments we love are woven into the fabric of what continues. He called this interbeing: the understanding that life does not end at the edges we think it does. Mary sensed this before she had language for it. She did not leave because some part of her recognized that the story was not finished.

When we are afraid, we read the evidence as definitive. We mistake the silence of the tomb for the silence of God. But love reads differently. Love knows that silence is not always absence — sometimes it is the held breath before something begins. Mary stayed in that silence. She stayed in the not-knowing. And in that staying, she became the first witness to a world made new.

## Three Qualities of Mary's Consciousness

### 1. Devotion — Staying Close

Mary remained when others left. In our own spiritual lives, devotion looks like returning — not just in crisis, but as a daily act of tending. Brother Lawrence, the seventeenth-century mystic who practiced the presence of God while washing dishes in a monastery kitchen, said the soul's great work is simply to keep coming back. To stay close, even when — especially when — it feels like the tomb is sealed and the story is over.

What are you being called to remain with rather than escape? That is a question worth sitting with this week.

### 2. Grief Honored, Not Suppressed

Mary wept openly, without apology. She did not show courage. She brought her full self. Researchers Tedeschi and Calhoun found that post-traumatic growth does not bypass grief — it moves through it. The people who were most transformed were not the ones who recovered fastest; they were the ones who remained present in the darkness long enough for something new to emerge.

Communities of faith can sometimes inadvertently rush people toward the resurrection before they have been allowed to fully inhabit the tomb. But Mary shows us another way. She brought her grief with her fully and honestly — and in that honesty, she became available to what was coming.

Mary's grief was not an obstacle to the resurrection. It was the very condition that kept her at the tomb, present and available, when the moment of recognition arrived.

### 3. Openness — Relinquishing the Verdict

Mary had no framework for resurrection. She held the unknown with enough openness that when something entirely new appeared, she had not already ruled it out. The contemplative tradition calls this apophatic awareness — releasing our fixed images of what God, healing, or the future must look like. Not because our images are bad, but because they are always smaller than the reality.

A simple practice: the next time you find yourself certain that a story is over — a relationship, a dream, a season of your life — try asking gently: What if I'm wrong about this ending? Not in denial but holding the story loosely enough to leave room for surprise.

The risen Christ does not announce with thunder. It speaks quietly, Jesus said, "Mary." — John 20:16

**Reflection Questions**

Take a few minutes with one or more of these questions. There is no right answer — only honest presence.

*Where in your life are you standing outside the tomb? What sealed-tomb story have you been carrying?*

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*Which of the three qualities — devotion, grief honored, or openness — is most calling to you right now? What would practicing it look like this week?*

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*When has the risen Christ appeared in your life in a way you almost missed? Where were you when you heard your name?*

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*What judgment might you be holding — about a person, a situation, or yourself — that could stand to be held a little more loosely?*

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**Walk Your Talk — Practices for This Week**

***The Staying Practice (Daily)***

Set aside five minutes each morning to simply remain. No agenda, no requests, no performance. Sit with whatever is present — grief, gratitude, confusion, hope — and practice the willingness to stay close. This is the Mary Magdalene posture: not forcing an outcome but remaining faithful to what you love. Over time, this simple returning becomes the ground from which recognition grows.

You may find that nothing seems to happen. Stay anyway. The disciples investigated and left. Mary stayed. The practice is in the staying.

***The Judgment Audit (Reflective)***

Identify one situation in your life where you have quietly closed the book — decided the story is over, the door is shut, the healing is not coming. Write it down without judgment. Then ask gently: What if I'm wrong about this ending? Hold the question with open hands, without pressure.

You are not pretending the difficulty away — you are simply leaving room for what you cannot yet see. This is not optimism. It is the deeper practice of spiritual openness: choosing to keep your conclusions provisional long enough for grace to work.

***Noticing the Risen Christ (Evening)***

Each evening this week, take a moment to ask: Where did I glimpse new life today? It may have been a moment of unexpected courage, an encounter that felt like grace, a small healing you almost attributed to coincidence. Write it down. Over time, this practice trains the eye of the soul. What we attend to, we begin to recognize. What we recognize, we can receive.

**This Week's Scripture**

*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."*

John 20:18

**Easter Affirmation**

*I am a soul awake to new life.  
I recognize the risen Christ  
in every healing, every hope,  
every beginning.  
Love is my lens. I am learning to see.*

**A Blessing for the Road**

*May you leave this Easter a little more like Mary Magdalene — devoted, honest, and open. May you carry into your week the willingness to stay close to what you love, even when the outcome is uncertain. And may you find, in the ordinary moments of your days, a voice speaking your name — calling you back to the life that is always, always rising.*

**Happy Easter. Amen.**