



#6 In the Worth It Series

GRATEFUL

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Forest Park Church

April 2nd 2023

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Palm Sunday is the occasion on the Christian calendar when we commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry in Jerusalem. The concept of a triumph requires some explanation, because it's foreign to modern believers.

- A triumph was a ceremonial and celebratory procession through the streets of a city. When the Romans wanted to celebrate their latest conquest, they celebrated with a triumph.
- In fact, in 70 CE the Roman general Titus destroyed the very city into which Jesus entered that first Palm Sunday.
- Titus's triumph, with the spoils from the Jerusalem temple, is depicted on a monument that remains in Rome to this day.

That first Palm Sunday, Jesus wasn't the only person leading a procession into Jerusalem. There was another one coming from the opposite side of the city.

Traditionally, Pilate paraded into Jerusalem on the first day of Passover Week, entering the west gate – the front gate – with legions of chariots, horses, and foot soldiers, dressed for battle and armed with swords and spears.

- Pontius Pilate entered Jerusalem from his home in Caesarea.
- His procession was in the Roman style—complete with a terrifying display of Rome's military might.
- Pilate was perched atop a majestic stallion, and he had all the trappings of Roman wealth and prestige.
- Rome's authority would not be questioned. The majesty with which Pilate enters the front door of the city was meant to inspire awe and fear, respect and obedience.
- And it came with an undeniable message directed to the pilgrims who had gathered in the city from near and far for the Passover festivities: "Keep the peace, or we will control you by force!"



Meanwhile, at the east gate – the back gate – another parade is underway.

- This parade was just as carefully staged as Pilate's entry into Jerusalem.
- It was a counter-procession, a different vision of what a Kingdom should be
- A subversive action against the powers that ruled Jerusalem.
- Jesus' humble, yet triumphal, entry into Jerusalem stood in contrast to the magnificence and brutality on display at the opposite end of the city.
- **Jesus brings peace, while Pilate brings a sword.**

And yet before the week was out this king would become a criminal hanging from a cross.

- Humans are such fickle creatures.
- One moment we are cheering for something the next we are booing at it.
- People really haven't changed all that much.

This Sunday we are going to consider yet another relationship in the life of Christ.

What are the key components to faithfully following the savior?

The Story begins in:

Luke 8:1-3

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Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Mary Magdalene was a woman who was healed by Jesus, and she never took this for granted.

- She followed him and listened carefully to his teachings.
- She couldn't go back to her old way of life—not after she had been set free.



We know so little about Mary, **but her name is mentioned 14 times in the Gospels.**

- That is more than any male follower of Christ except the three in the inner circle-Peter, James, and John.
- Mary Magdalene has excited the interest of more poets, artists, and musicians than any other woman in the Bible

Mary Magdalene probably did not seem like anyone special during her lifetime.

- She was probably just referred to as Mary, since they didn't not use last names in this time period, and there were many other Mary's.
- But, because of her faith and her example, her name has lived on in history far beyond her earthly life, so she is known today as Mary Magdalene.

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1. Driven by Gratitude

Luke 7:47

Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

Mary first met Jesus when he healed her by casting out seven demons from within her (Luke 8:2).

We don't know anything else about her life.

- The Bible never refers to her as a prostitute.
- It's also only rumors that insinuate that she was also the sinful woman who anointed Jesus's feet with her tears (Luke 7:36-50 -
- This started in the 400- 600 AD

But she did have something in common with this unnamed woman.

- She also loved Jesus much for healing her from the demons within her.
- This gratitude kept Mary loyal to her Lord and serving him until the end.

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Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



How might gratitude—and gratitude to God specifically—be vital for flourishing and resilience in today’s world?

- Amid pandemics,
- climate change,
- addiction,
- political extremism and polarization,
- financial collapse,
- crime,
- inequality,
- international conflicts,
- nuclear threat,

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So, how can we cultivate a grateful heart?

1. Begin the day with thanks.

After you wake up in the morning, let your first words be thanksgiving to the Lord: “Thank you Father for giving me another day.

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- Thank you for making me Your own.
- Thank you that, whatever this day holds, I can rest secure in the gospel.”
- If it is hard for you to remember to begin the day in conversation with the Lord, you might write your prayer out on a piece of paper to put up near your bed or on your bathroom mirror.

2. Remember all of His benefits.

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Psalm 103:2

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

There is no better way of remembering the Lord’s benefits than to recall them and speak of them often!

- The Psalms give us the model for this kind of remembrance.
- The authors give thanks to God by calling out how He has shown His faithfulness.
- How has God shown His faithfulness to you?



- Make a daily habit of telling yourself and others how God has blessed you!

3. Read His Word.

- 8 When you spend time with the Lord reading His word, pause and thank Him for what He is revealing and teaching to you.
- Thank Him for giving you His Word in the first place!
 - As you linger in the Lord's presence you have access to unmeasurable treasures.

4. Thank Him for the hard things.

- 9 Because life is still broken with the presence of sin, we encounter difficulties every day.
- What if we took our hard situations and instead of becoming despondent, we thanked the Lord for His faithfulness and our place in Christ?
 - Pausing to be thankful turns our hearts away from ourselves and back towards the Lord.

Corrie and Betsie ten Boom had to learn to give thanks in all circumstances, including Ravensbrück Concentration Camp during War World II. Their family was arrested by Nazis for hiding Jews and consequently sent to concentration camps. Corrie and Bestie were moved to a new barrack invested with fleas, yet they were able to find a reason to give thanks to God

Mary followed Jesus, learned from him, serving, and setting a groundbreaking example for other women everywhere. All because of gratitude.

10 2. Jesus should be the center of your universe

After Mary's first encounter with Jesus, He becomes the sun that her life revolves around.

Luke tells us:



Luke 8:1-3

“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, And also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means”

Not only did Mary follow Jesus and the disciples from town to town, but she and some other women helped to support Christ and the disciples financially. This role continued throughout His ministry.

Throughout Mary’s walk with Jesus, she had to face many obstacles.

- Mary was with Jesus and the disciples while Jesus was being persecuted.
- She is also listed among the women standing close to him during the crucifixion.
- While many of the disciples of Jesus, like Peter, were quick to leave Jesus during a time when following him was dangerous,
- Mary stayed and followed Christ no matter the cost to herself.

Matthew tells us that they were present at the crucifixion, and followed Jesus all the way to Galilee to take care of Him:

Matthew 27:55-56

“Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons”

It’s no surprise that she would find herself center stage at the resurrection, too.

We should follow Mary’s example.

1. When we encounter Jesus, we shouldn’t simply return to the life we left. He changes everything.
2. Our whole life becomes about following and serving Him until-like Mary-our story becomes intertwined and indistinguishable from His.



You were designed for the purpose of knowing Jesus Christ and making Him the center of your life.

- It means you acknowledge Jesus as the ultimate authority in your life and you voluntarily yield the control of your life to Him.
- For Jesus to be the center of your life, it means He is in control.
- You no longer desire to independently run your own life, but you surrender your whole self to Jesus and to following His lead.

Why would I do that?" Don't we all want to be in control?

- William Ernest Henley wrote in his poem, "Invictus": "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."
- Our wayward self always wants to control our own life, but following Jesus means that you give Him control.
- He calls the shots. The sign hanging on the door of your life reads: "Now under new management."

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

12 3. Jesus uses the weak to shame the strong

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul talks about the gospel as being foolishness. The world doesn't understand it, so they discount and dismiss it.

According to Paul, God did that on purpose:

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him"

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We see a perfect example of this principle in Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene.



- In a time when women were seen as secondary citizens with no real autonomy,
- Jesus demonstrated a special tenderness and care for women.
- We see this in His choice to reveal Himself to Mary first after the resurrection.

This is the most critical event in history, and Jesus made a woman the first witness.

- He even encourages her to tell the disciples (John 20:17).
- The irony is that they don't believe Mary and the other women (Luke 24:11).
- We need to be careful not to dismiss things that don't follow our expectations, Jesus doesn't always do what we expect.
- He delights in working out His plan in the most unlikely of ways.
- He did that through Mary, and if we'll let Him, He'll do it through us, too!

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Conclusion:

After the resurrection Jesus would ask her a strange question. "whom she was seeking?"

- Was she seeking a man that was crucified and buried?
- Or was she seeking the Lord who was crucified, buried, and risen again?

It matters what we're seeking.

This is an important question for all who call on the name of Jesus. And it is of utmost importance for people who haven't believed yet.

- Do you see him as a good man and a good teacher?
- Or do you see him as the King of Heaven?

When we seek first his kingdom and truth, the rest of our journey will fall into place (Matthew 6:33).

Mary lived these words from **Colossians 2:6-7**:



“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”

Mary Magdalene was one of the first people to share gospel truth with a broken world.

- Her testimony urges you to do the same.
- People all around you are lonely and feeling hopeless.
- Why not today?
- Won't you go and tell?

