



**African Methodist Episcopal Church
Fifth Episcopal District
Midwest Annual Conference
Women's Missionary Society**

April Meditation

**Mary Magdalene
'Was There'**

***"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."
Isaiah 43:1 TNIV***

"But He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!" Isaiah 52:5 NLT

"Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance." John 20:1 NLT

Key Scriptures: Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40-41, 47; 16:1-19; Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1-18

Thought: Offer thanks to God, for the death and resurrection of Jesus, His Son and our Savior.

PRAYER: Lord, make me a woman like Mary Magdalene, who follows you not because of a legalistic understanding of her faith, but because of an overwhelming sense of gratitude and love for Your own extravagant grace. Help me surrender any darkness to You and flood me with the light of Your presence. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I pray. Amen.

MEDITATION: There were several women who stepped outside the cultural expectations of their time to play a significant role in the ministry of Jesus. Only the twelve disciples are mentioned more often than certain women, Mary Magdalene being one of them. Let us meditate on "Her Story". She made her way through the shadows to the tomb, grateful for the darkness that shrouded her tears. Mary wondered, could the world go on as though nothing at all had happened? How could the mountains keep from crashing down, the sky resist falling? Had everyone but her lost their minds? Had no one noticed that the world had collapsed two days ago? For the past three years she had followed the Rabbi across Galilee and Judea, providing for Jesus out of her own small purse. She had loved Jesus' hearty laughter and smile that flashed across His face whenever He saw her. Wherever they went, Mary felt privileged to tell her story, grateful to be among Jesus' growing band of followers. Mary had grown up in Magdala, a prosperous town on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee. But Mary had not prospered. How could a woman thrive when she was filled with demons who controlled her mind? Though Mary had begged for mercy, no mercy had been given. Instead, Mary's delusions locked her in a nightmare world, isolating her even from small pleasures and simple kindness. **BUT THEN JESUS HAD COME!** Like no Rabbi Mary had ever encountered, Jesus seemed neither afraid nor repulsed by her illness. "Mary," Jesus had called to her, as though he had known her all of her life. Mary could feel a great light advancing toward her, forcing the darkness away. Suddenly her familiar companions were themselves begging for mercy, but no mercy was given. Mary Magdalene, a woman possessed by seven demons was restored to her right mind, her

bondage, a thing of the past. Eyes that had once been holes swallowing the light, now shone like pools reflecting the sun. Every one in Magdala marveled at the change in Mary. How could Mary not love Jesus? How could she not want to do everything for Him? To be close to Jesus; to witness healing after healing; to be stirred, surprised and refreshed by His teachings. This, indeed, was joy to a woman unaccustomed to joy. Jesus had His share of enemies, Mary knew. Religious leaders in Jerusalem had been stung by His truth-telling, offended by His galling lack of diplomacy. Mary was glad that every trap they laid for Jesus had failed ... until now. How suddenly they had struck, even though Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims for Passover. The temple guard had arrested Him at night and then turned Jesus over to Roman authorities, who mocked and whipped Him nearly to death. The Rabbi from Galilee, who had promised the poor in spirit they would surely inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, was now in chains. Jesus' hunger and thirst for righteousness had left His Body hanging naked on a Roman cross. Mary had done her best to fight off the shadows that crowded near again as she waited through the awful hours of Jesus' agony. When it was over, Mary had watched Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea unfasten Jesus' Body from the cross. Gently they wrapped Him in myrrh and aloe, enough for a king's burial, they laid Jesus in the tomb. Finally, as a stone was rolled across the tomb, sealing it shut, Mary turned away. After the Sabbath was over, on the next day Mary purchased more spices. Before sunrise Sunday morning, Mary approached the tomb. May wondered how on earth she would roll the stone away. But to her surprise, the mouth of the tomb lay wide open. Strips of linen were lying on the floor and the burial cloth that was wrapped around Jesus' head was folded up by itself. Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. Then Mary looked inside. Two men dressed in white sat where Jesus' body had lain. "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked. "They have taken my Lord away," she said, and I don't know where they put Him." Mary turned and saw a man looking at her. "Woman," He said, "why are you crying?" Who are you looking for?" Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener, she pleaded, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." "Mary," Jesus said. Startled, Mary cried out, "Rabboni" (meaning Teacher). The sun had risen. With it fled the darkness that had pursued Mary ever since she had heard the news of Jesus' arrest. Jesus, the one who had raised her from a living death, had Himself risen from the dead. Mary fell to the ground in awe, remembering the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." The garden that had so recently been a place of shadows and gloom now seemed green and bright, as though paradise itself had broken through. The risen Jesus had appeared, not to rulers and kings, nor even first of all to His Disciples, but to a woman whose love had held her at the cross and led her to the grave. Mary Magdalene, a person who had been afflicted by demons, whose testimony would not have held up in court because of being a woman, was the first witness of the resurrection. Yes, the Gospels teach us that women were in Jesus' life and Ministry, they supported Jesus and His Disciples by caring for them, with their income, opened their homes, prepared and served meals. The most significant woman in Jesus' life was, of course, Mary, His mother. She had remained in the background during Jesus' public ministry. Jesus, gentle care of her when He was hanging on the cross reveals a Son's love for His mother. Women watched Jesus suffer on the cross, remaining there until He breathed His last and was buried. After Mary Magdalene, other women were the first to go to the tomb on Sunday morning and also were the first to witness Jesus' resurrection. Once again, God had revealed Himself to the lowly. Luke's gospel in particular portrays Jesus as someone who both understood and respected women, conferring on them a stature that most of them had not previously enjoyed. Jesus' dealings with women throughout the Gospels gives all of us, men and women alike, a model to follow as we consider the status and treatment of the women with whom we come into contact every day. It will be the humble whose hearing is sharp enough to perceive the Massage of God's Love.

Portions from Women of the Bible, by Ann Spangler / Jean E. Syswerda

If you will be participating in an Easter Sunrise Service, that's great! If not, set your alarm clock so that you wake up a half hour before dawn. Find a spot where you can watch the sunrise. In the early morning shadows, tell God about the areas of darkness in your life or in the life of a loved one. Whatever it may be, an illness, loneliness, a troubled marriage, an addiction, a wayward child, financial burdens, troubled school, decision in church, or deteriorating neighborhood. Whatever it is, surrender it by imagining yourself placing in the garden tomb next to the body of Jesus. As the sun rises, meditate on that first Easter morning and remember that when Jesus walked out of the tomb, you and your loved ones walked out with Him. Ask God for the faith to wait and watch for His delivering power.

AFFIRMATION: _____

AN EASTER WISH

**May the glad dawn
Of Easter morn
Bring joy to you.**

**May the calm eve
Of Easter leave
A peace divine with you.**

**May Easter night
On your heart write,
O Christ, I live for Thee!**

Mrs. Freddie Mae Smith, MWCBWMS, Meditation Chairperson

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