

Reeks: Ontmoet Jesus, weer. Vir die eerste keer...

Titel: ...In your Tears

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Morning, friends, it's always a privilege to be with you and to try serve you with God's word. And we will be trying again today in a very difficult subject, and we pray that Christ will come to us, each one, in a fresh way. We begin a series: Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time. Something wonderful can happen in our lives when that takes place, and we're going to look at a story together from the gospel. You may want to find it so that you can read it with me, and perhaps keep it our throughout the message this morning as I just slowly go through it together with you.

It's from John chapter 20 and I'm going to read from verse ten, and this is a moment in Jesus' life just after the resurrection. He meets Mary. She's crying outside the tomb. Verse ten: Then the disciples went back to where they were staying, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying and as she wept she bent over to look into the tomb. She saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot, and they asked her, woman, why are you crying? They have taken my Lord away, she said, and I don't know where they have put him.

And at this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, woman, why are you crying? Who is it that you are looking for? Thinking that he was the gardener she said, sir, if you've carried Him away tell me where you have put Him and I will get Him. Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned toward him and she cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, do not hold on to Me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God.

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news. She said, I have seen the Lord. I have seen the Lord, and she told them that he had said these things to her. And so we thank God so much for this gospel story that comes to us and we pray that God will speak to us very deeply through it this morning.

It was in 1978. I had just finished my training at Rhodes University and I had the wonderful opportunity of being going across... of going across to Washington to work in a small church in downtown Washington for about six weeks, one of those churches that many books have been written about. It's a church that has had a magnificent witness in the downtown parts of that great city, a church by the name of Church of the Saviour. As I was coming to the end of my stay I had a conversation with the minister, with the pastor, a wonderful, wonderful Southern Baptist by the name of Gordon Cosby, and as we sat together having coffee I asked him a question that I've only asked three people in my life. I asked him whether he had a word for me.

Now, as I've said to you before, there are... there have been hundreds of people who've had a word for me that I haven't asked for, but he was... he's one of the three people that I've asked for a word. And he was very quiet, and then he spoke these words to me, and they were words that scorched their way into my heart, words that I've never forgotten, and almost every time I stand up to teach or to preach these words come back into my mind.

In fact, as I was sitting at the back of the stage while Frans was singing these words again came back to me, and these were the words that he spoke to me. He said, Trevor, whenever you teach and whenever you preach, don't ever forget that every person sits next to their own pool of tears. I have never forgotten those words, never, and even now, even now as I speak I know that each one of us in this vast auditorium, each one of us sits next to our own pool of tears.

Now, I shared that story with you again. I shared it with you about two years ago, if you can remember, which I'm sure you can't. I remember sharing that two years ago, but I share it with you again because it leads us very deeply into our theme today, which is all about Christ meeting us in our tears. I don't know if you remember the story that I've just read to you from John chapter 20. When that story begins Mary is standing outside the tomb and she's weeping. She's weeping. She's in a place of tears. She is weeping for herself because she's lost someone that she loves deeply. She's lost Jesus.



Jesus had loved her back to life. Jesus had given her life back to her. Jesus had met her when she was at the very bottom of her world and had given her hope, and now He was dead. He was dead and she's weeping. She's weeping, I think, also, I think, for Jesus, 33 years of age, executed on the cross like a criminal between two other criminals. It wasn't fair. It wasn't fair. Here is the best person who had ever walked this earth, killed, executed, extinguished. She's weeping. She is weeping for her country, for her nation, Israel. They had hoped that Jesus was going to be the Messiah; that Jesus was going to be the Christ, but on that Good Friday when Jesus had been put to death the hope of Israel had died. Now she is weeping.

That's how the story begins, but did you notice that the story, if you're looking at it, the story doesn't end like that. The story ends with Mary living beyond her tears. The story ends with Mary going to the other disciples who are still living in darkness, who are still living in grief, who are still living in loss, and she goes to them as a witness of the resurrected Christ who had met her in her tears. She's living beyond her tears.

And so I'm praying today, deeply, I've been praying all week, that somehow today, today, like it happened for Mary, that Christ will meet us in our tears and begin in each one of our lives a journey through our tears and beyond our tears. That is my prayer. I pray that that will happen for you and I pray that that will happen for me. So let's look at this journey in Mary's life. Let's look at how it happened very carefully, because I have a hunch that the way it happened for her could be the way it happens for us as well.

Did you notice how the story... how the story begins, how the journey for Mary begins, the journey beyond her tears? It begins when she has the courage to befriend her own tears, to face her own pain. Do you remember what happens right at the beginning, how Jesus comes to her? It's a very moving part of the story, that when Jesus comes to her when she is weeping outside the tomb Jesus, doesn't condemn her for her tears. Did you notice that?

He doesn't preach at her. He doesn't assume that He's an expert on her pain. He doesn't say to her, for goodness' sake, Mary, pull yourself together. Can't you see it's... can't you see I've risen from the dead? He doesn't say that. He asks her a question, and it's a question that helps Mary to face her pain. He asks her, he says to her, Mary, why are you crying. Why are you crying? And it's a question that helps Mary to face her tears. It's a question that helps Mary to tell the story behind her pain. It's a story... it's a question that listens Mary into speaking. Why are you crying? Why are you crying?

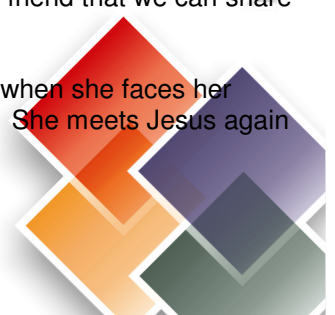
Let's be honest. It's very hard for some of us to answer that question. It's very hard for some of us to go to the place of our pain. We don't want to go there; it's too painful, and so often we run away from our tears, often. We drink too much. Whenever I meet someone who's drinking too much I know often that underneath that struggle there's often pain that they don't want to face. Just give me another... give me another whisky. Maybe that'll just, you know, help me not to feel the pain too much, or we overmedicate, or we just work hard. We work from early morning till late at night. We just keep running, or we run into destructive behaviour.

We just... we're angry all the time. Sometimes it's easier to be angry all the time than just face the pain that we've got in our life. Or sometimes we just go and say let's go shopping and buy some more stuff, and maybe that will take the pain away. But the journey beyond tears, the journey beyond tears begins when we allow Christ to come to us and He says to us, why are you crying, and then we share our pain with Christ, and that's where the journey beyond tears begins. Will you answer that question for yourself today?

Why are you crying? Lord, I'm crying because when I wake up in the morning it just seems so dark, and it seems as if the sun has gone out of my life. Lord, I'm crying because my marriage is in pain and I don't know how to put it right. Lord, I'm crying because my kids keep making destructive choices and it's hard to see this. Lord, I'm crying because my business is, like, on the razor edge and I don't know what way it's going to go.

Lord, I'm crying because my life just seems so empty. I've got so many things in my life but there is such a deep emptiness in me. Lord, I'm crying because I lost my loved one and I don't know how to keep going without the presence of someone that I love so much. Lord, I'm crying because it seems as if You've disappeared from my life and I don't know where You are. Can you answer that question for yourself today? And sometimes we also need to find a human being, a human wailing wall, maybe a professional person, maybe a good friend that we can share our answer to that question with, but that's where the journey begins.

But then, go back to the story. Notice that for Mary her journey beyond her tears, it starts when she faces her tears, her pain, but then she has a fresh encounter with the living Lord, a fresh encounter. She meets Jesus again



for the first time, and that's what we need. It's a beautiful moment and I could spend hours on it, and you're so glad that I can't so you can get out of here, but it's a beautiful moment. Mary... Jesus comes to her and says, Mary, it's a... He calls us by name. God always comes to us personally. He comes to us by name. He calls us by name. His love for us is personal, intimate. Mary turns. Did you notice that that word, turns, appears twice in that story? She turns. She turns.

The journey beyond tears always happens as we turn. She's looking into the grave and she turns to Christ, the life, the light, the hope. She turns. That's what repentance is all about. It's about turning and turning and turning and turning, and some of us today need to turn again. We're looking into the grave. We're looking into the despair, to turn to the life and the light that Christ is for us, and as she turns, don't you love this moment, she thinks... she thinks Jesus is the gardener and we think to ourselves, Mary, how can you be so dof.

Mary gets it right. Jesus is the gardener. When you think gardener, what do you think of immediately? You think of the book of Genesis, the garden, Adam and Eve messing up the garden. Christ is the new Adam who comes into the... into our garden that is full of weeds, that's been spoilt by pain and heartache and heartbreak, and He is the gardener, and He comes, and in our tears he plants little seeds of new hope and new life and new beginnings. That's what Christ does when we meet Him again for the first time. He's the gardener who comes into your garden and my garden that has been spoilt by pain and heartache and loss and grief and abuse and divorce and sadness and despair, and he comes and he plants new seeds of hope. He's the gardener, and it's as we turn and as we have this fresh encounter with the living Lord that the journey from our tears, through our tears, beyond our tears begins to happen.

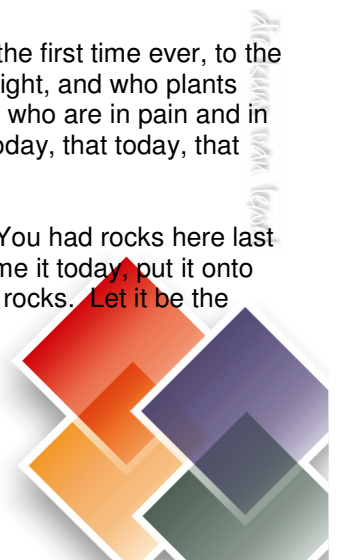
But did you notice how this story ends? This story... you know, when you have an encounter with Christ there is a new energy in you, a new resurrection energy, a new resurrection hope. The pain may still be there, but something has happened. And you can see this in Mary, how this... she gets... she gets up and she runs to her brothers and her sisters, her fellow disciples who are still in loss and grief, and she goes to them with the good news that she has seen the Lord. She's a resurrection person and now she is reaching out to other people in their tears. And so often our healing from our tears happens when Christ meets us, and then with Christ we connect to other people also in tears, and that's part of our healing.

I remember meeting 15, 16 years ago, a little bit longer, a lovely couple, Ivan and Norma, and Ivan came to see me, and he was in a place of tears. He had three children, all young, two of them severely, severely handicapped. He was angry, angry with God, with life. He felt that God had dealt out a bad hand. I met with him I think for over 18 months, and slowly the resurrected Christ came to him and Norma, his wife, came to him, came to then, planted seeds of newness in their life, and one day, I'll never forget, they came into my office and they said to me, Trevor, we want to start a ministry in our church to parents who've also got severely, severely disabled children, and so out of his tears he was connecting now with other guys in their tears. It was part of his journey towards healing and newness. And that's what happens again and again and again, that as Christ meets us in our tears we are given a new hope and a new energy, and we are able to begin to connect with the tears roundabout us as people have hope, as people have light.

Let me end. Let me just bring this to a close. Every person sits next to a pool of tears, every person. Every, every human being sits next to a pool of tears, and the wonderful thing is that it's in the pool of tears that Christ meets us. That's how he met Mary, and that's how he meets men and women again and again and again, and so often we want to run away from the very place where Christ wants to meet us, in our tears. And so He says to us today, why are you crying, and He invites us to find an answer to that question, to put words to that and to share that with Him, maybe with someone else as well that we can trust.

And then He invites us to turn, just to turn, to turn, to turn, to turn again as though it were the first time ever, to the living Lord, to the living Lord who comes to us as the gardener, the gardener, Mary got it right, and who plants seeds in our messed up gardens so that we with Christ can begin to move towards others who are in pain and in tears, and that's, I think, what the journey beyond tears is all about, and I'm praying that today, that today, that journey is going to begin for all of us in a fresh way.

We've got a... sometimes doing something can be helpful. We've got some rocks here. You had rocks here last week, and maybe you want to just come and write down the pain. Maybe you want to name it today, put it onto paper. Lord, I'm crying because, and you may just want to stick that piece of paper in the rocks. Let it be the wailing wall today.



Maybe some of you want to in a new way turn to the resurrected Christ who comes to us and calls us by name, and maybe you want to come and just light a candle, and it expresses... it expresses your turning. You're saying Christ, I turn to You, come to me. Plant the seeds of newness in my life today, or maybe some of us just want to be prayed for today. You just want someone to pray with you, and so, right at the side there will be men and women, not experts; they've also got their pools of tears, but they've made themselves available today just to pray with anyone who needs prayer. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus Christ, You live beyond the grave. You live beyond crucifixion. You live beyond death, and Your presence in the power of Your spirit is throughout this universe and it's right here today. Come to us. Come to us in that place of deep struggle and pain. Help us, Lord, and give us the faith and the confidence and the trust we need to turn to You in a new way as though it were the first time ever, and then lead us, Lord, lead us on that journey of ministry and mission as we seek in our everyday lives, at work, at university, at school, in the neighbourhood, at the club, to be aware of the tears roundabout us. And just like You came to us, help us, Lord, with You, to go to others. This is our prayer and we offer it to You, Lord, with all the love and the longing and the pain of our hearts today. In Your name we pray, and together as God's people we say amen, amen.

Friends, may the joy, the real joy, the deep joy of Jesus Christ be with you. Have a great day, friends. Have a great day, and if you need to come forward you will do that. You will do that.

