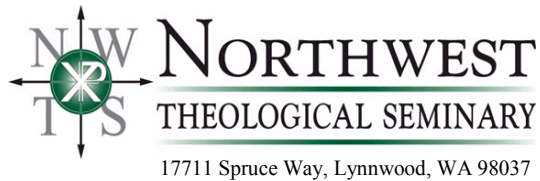


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NORTHWEST THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY NEWSLETTER

His story is...

# Our Story

## Mary at Jesus' Tomb

John 20:1-18

This passage takes us to a strange place. Our familiarity with the story may have dulled our sense of it, but it is strange nonetheless. After all, it takes us to a graveyard—not the most enticing destination! What is more, it takes us to a woman so distraught over a lost loved one that she is weeping intensely because she cannot find their corpse! Although it may seem strange at first, Mary's words and actions reveal to us something that ought to be very normal for every true Christian: a deep-seated, personal and affectionate longing to be near to the risen Christ.

How do we see this in the passage? First, we must remember which Mary is Mary *Magdalene*. She is the one from whom Jesus had cast out no less than *seven* demons (Luke 8:2). Her agony over Christ's death flows out of her love and appreciation for him in response to this marvelous deliverance. Her deep-seated longing for her Lord illustrates the saying of Jesus: she who has been forgiven much, loves much. The greatness of her deliverance is thus answered by the greatness of her love for Christ.

Second, we also see the intensity of this longing in the circumstances of her presence at the tomb. Note John's description of the area: she came to the tomb "while it was still dark" (20:1). This is no perfunctory detail in a gospel which has regularly compared the contrast between darkness and light with the kingdoms of Satan and God. Mary feels the power of that darkness: it has taken away her Lord in crucifixion and death. But the darkness has not overcome her. Peter and John come for a brief moment to inspect the premises, but Mary lingers as she longs to see her Lord once again.

Third, we cannot miss the overt out-pouring of emotion that clearly demonstrates the depth of her desire to be with Christ. No less than four times the narrative makes explicit reference to her weeping at the tomb. But as we examine these tears carefully, we realize that Mary is not crying simply over the fact that Jesus has died. Instead, her tears are flowing due to the fact that Jesus' physical body can no longer be found. Even though he was dead, Mary knew that his body would still be in the tomb. Being near to someone's lifeless body is no substitute for their living presence. But Mary's longing was so great, she would seek even a shell of that former fellowship she shared with her Lord.

Fourth, we most clearly see her desire to be with Christ in the words she utters by his tomb. In verses 2 and 13, we read Mary's nearly identical words to two disciples (Peter and John), as well as two angels. In both, Mary directs her hearers to the absence of Christ's body in the tomb. But there is a difference in the two answers. In 20:2, Mary uses a direct object and the first person plural: "They have taken away *the* Lord..." and *we* do not know where they have laid him." Notice how the second answer is more deeply personal.

(Continued on page 2)

Now she uses a possessive and a first person singular: “They have taken away *my* Lord...and *I* do not know where they have laid him.” Do you see how this second statement is more revealing and more poignant than the first? Rather than simply reflecting the corporate, more objective facts of the matter, Mary reveals that Jesus’ absence is the source of her deep-seated, personal grief. The problem is not simply that “*the* Lord” is gone, but that “*my* Lord” is nowhere to be found. My heart’s grief is not just that *we* do not know where he is, but that *I* do not know where to find him.

And what is the ultimate source of Mary’s deep-seated longing to be with the risen Christ? It is not her great deliverance from seven demons. It does not ultimately stem from anything within her. The ultimate source of Mary’s deep-seated longing to be with Christ is none other than Christ’s deep-seated longing to be with her. Note how the words of Mary to Jesus are mirrored in the words of Jesus to Mary: “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (20:17). First Mary said “the Lord,” and afterwards she personalized it with “my Lord” (20:2, 13). Look at how Jesus does the same. First he says “the Father,” and afterwards he personalizes it with “my Father *and* your Father...*my* God and *your* God.”

Do you see what this reveals? It reveals to us the heart of Christ. Deep within the bowels of Christ’s heart is a love and a longing not only to be with his *brothers* and sisters, but also to be with them in the presence of God the Father. This was a love and a longing so deep that it took him to the depths of crucifixion and death, but now flows forever in his ascended glory. This is a love known not only by Mary, but also by all who long to be with Christ. It is a love and a longing that has no origin in man, but comes solely by the grace of God in Christ. Or as John would later say in his first epistle: “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This is a love that carries the Christian through every sorrow, every trial, and every loss, because it is love that finds its origin in the heart of the resurrected and ascended Savior. Though he once was dead, he is now alive forevermore, as is his never-ceasing longing that we might be with him and share in his glory (John 17:24).

—Benjamin Swinburnson, NWTS Class of 2007; pastor, Lynnwood OPC.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FACULTY NEWS

**A Kerux App for your SmartPhone!** *Kerux: the Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* is now mobile-friendly. Access <http://www.kerux.com/> on your smartphone to read all journal archive articles and reviews in a layout optimized for small screens. In addition, Kerux now has a Windows Phone 8 app. For details, go to the store on your Windows Phone; or go to <http://www.windowsphone.com/> and search for “Kerux”; or set your browser to kerux+app.

**This Summer:** Dr. Bill Dennison will be at NWTS from August 4-22 in order to teach Apologetics and Prolegomena to Systematic Theology. Auditors are welcome at these classes. Check the nwts.edu website for times.

**Confessions Set Completed:** Professor James Dennison’s four-volume set on *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation* is now completed and available for purchase. It can be ordered from Reformation Heritage Books (go the NWTS web page and follow the links there to volume 4 or to the whole set) or Ebay. This is quite an historic event because many of these confessions have never before been available in English. The fourth volume contains a Scripture, name and subject index to all four volumes.

**Faculty and Student News:** Professor Peter Vosteen has been filling pulpits in the area in addition to his teaching. They include in the last three months: Oak Harbor OPC, Lynnwood OPC (twice a month), Lynden URC and Bellingham URC.

Stephen Lauer has been preaching in neighboring churches with great appreciation. Ben Davenport preached his first sermon at Lynnwood OPC (his home congregation). The congregation received the Word with an expression of amazement at his maturity. Ying-Ju Chen is helping Rev. Randy Bergquist at the Kent OPC (his home church). He is involved with Pastor Bergquist in teaching and pastoral visits. He is much loved by the congregation. Carlo Saulzallido is on track to graduate with the M.T.S. degree in a year. He attends the Bothell OPC and is used in their teaching ministry.

**Scholarship:** Due to a generous donation to the Seminary Scholarship Fund, the Faculty will be able to award a full tuition scholarship to an M.Div. student for the academic year 2014-2015. If you know a student who is contemplating attending seminary, please let them know about this opportunity.

**NWTS and the Word of God:** NWTS audio presentations on the Scriptures now has complete lectures on the entire epistle of Jude (<http://www.nwts.edu/audio/JTD/Jude.htm>). The new series currently underway is on the book of the prophet Zephaniah (<http://www.nwts.edu/audio/JTD/Zephaniah.htm>).

The next issue of Kerux will appear in May and will include an article on the epistle of Jude (online at Kerux.com).