

Mary Magdalene (MM) and Mary the mother of James (MJ)

MM: As one who had once been possessed by many demons, I knew fear and anxiety. I knew helplessness and shame. But Jesus took that away the day He set me free. I followed Him with others, mostly men, but some of us women followed and learned from Him too.

MJ: Yes, and in the 30's, not the 1930's the literal, original 30's, that was an exception rather than the rule. We understood fear and intimidation better than anyone in those days. Women didn't hold much power or position in the early Jewish community.

MM: But Jesus was different from the other Jewish leaders. He respected us just as He did His other followers. He called us to righteousness and to turn away from our sin.

MJ: It was amazing to be part of the group of followers, to be a disciple even though we were women. During those days, fear was replaced with joy and peace and a sense of purpose.

MM: Yes, overwhelming joy. Even when others criticized, I didn't feel afraid. Jesus' presence and power overshadowed all of it. Until the night of His arrest.

MJ: Actually, the whole day had a kind of cloud over it. As He approached Jerusalem, there seemed to be a deep sorrow in Jesus that we hadn't seen before. We had a sense that something was different.

MM: I felt those old feelings of dread. I had to fight it, push it away to keep going. But when they arrested Him and took Him away, I just wanted to run and hide! I was confused and terrified. What if they arrested us next?

MJ: Most of us ran away. Some of us watched from a distance. When they took him to the hill of the skull, we knew all was lost. But, as women, we have become accustomed to sorrow. We joined the others in hiding together and praying through the night.

MM: Early in the morning after the Sabbath, we knew we needed to prepare Jesus' body properly for burial. We took spices and went to the garden where the tomb was. Walking there that morning, life was different. I was still free from the demons of my past, but I wasn't free from the fear I had grown used to during those days. It seemed the demons had won. Fear and worry were my first thoughts.

MJ: I really don't know why we kept walking. The whole way we talked about how in the world could we anoint His body when it was behind that huge stone. But we kept walking. We went and, I guess, figured we could make a plan once we got there.

MM: And I'm so glad we did! We looked up to see that stone, and it was rolled away. There on the stone sat a man in white clothing.

MJ: He asked us why we were looking for Jesus among the dead. He was alive! He had risen from the dead!

MM: I can tell you that all the fear went away in that moment as our joy returned bigger than ever!

MJ: We ran back to tell the others.

MM: I always love God's sense of humor. Women got to be the first to see that Jesus was alive, and we were the first to get to share the good news!

MJ: Of course, they didn't believe us at first. John and Peter ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Soon, the whole group knew it was true.

MM: I learned something very important that day...joy overcomes fear and so much more. The joy of the Lord gives us strength to walk through just about anything, and knowing Jesus is all I need. The world around us can do what it wants. My joy, my hope, and my future is in His hands alone.

MJ: Like the Bible says, "What can mere man do to me? If God is for me, who can be against me!"

MM: Amen! Thank you, Jesus!