



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### Mother's Day Message

*"The Voice of Jesus"*

May 9, 2010

Dr. Matthew J. Hook

John 20:1 - 18

There is something about a person's voice. Maybe it is something your mom said in a certain way. The tones, the accents, the rise and fall of someone's voice. I've realize in recent years just how limited people with vocal problems are. Cathy Leadley shared earlier this week how she could cope, even with her mother's advances Alzheimer's, because, when nothing else was the same, it was still her mom's *voice*. The disease couldn't steal her mom's voice. There's just something about a person's voice. And earlier this week we lost a voice that we loved. [AUDIO CLIP OF ERNIE HARWELL]

*John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.*

- Three days earlier, the world had beaten righteousness and mercy and justice and truth to death, when they tortured and killed Jesus of Nazareth.
- John picks it up "*while it was still dark*". It's kind of comforting to think that Easter begins in the dark—a spiritual state of mind, as well as a time of day. If you are spiritually feeling "in the dark," have hope. You may be in for the encounter of a lifetime!
- Mary arrived, saw the stone was moved, and must have thought "grave robbers! Someone snatched the body!"
- What Mary didn't know was, on her way to the tomb, she had left the old world behind. The old world, where:
  - War is a constant reality, and millions of people live their lives forcibly displaced from their homes.
  - Millions of people live their whole lives in fear.
  - She left the old world where death grabs even our youth and children.
  - Where people live lives hurt and broken by sin, and those same hurting people hurt other people.
  - The old world is where God is distant, God is absent, or at least God can be put in a box.
- So, where was Mary? She'd come to the Ground Zero of a whole new reality, in which **Satan, sin, and death lost**. She had entered the new world, where death itself had been undone. But she didn't know it yet...
- She saw the stone and was just worried about the Body...
- Notice that her worst fears came *when she hadn't even seen*. How many of your worst fears—the ones that torment you most—are from things you have never seen come to pass!

*2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes, 11 but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13*

*They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

- The men go back to their homes. They leave! How typical. (I beat you to it!) but **Mary stood**. She stayed around to find out more. How about you? Have you stuck around long enough to experience it? (Or are you more like the men, going back home, on to the next thing, clueless?) Relationships don't often happen when you're sprinting at top speed from one place to the next. You have to stand by people. No agenda. Just being there with them. That goes for your relationship with people, (including yourself), and with God. Maybe you just need to slow down. Be quiet. Turn off the electronics. (Jim Collins, "Good to Great" said that here on Friday). Say no to a few things, and see how you get to "know" them.
- It was only after the men left, while she was weeping, that Mary stoops to see. God's messenger angels asked Mary: "**Why** are you crying?" and God asks you today: What are *you* crying for? What *do* you cry for these days? Is it for the same things that break God's heart? Or are you all caught up crying for things that don't really matter?
- And Mary sees the angels, the messengers, sitting. For once, the angels are seated. In every other account, the angels are going, announcing, and going again. But here they are sitting down. Could it be perhaps, it was because the whole job—God's divine plan from the beginning of creation was done? ...Now, Mary Magdalene didn't realize this. So she says:

*"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"*

- She didn't know it was Jesus. Your tears can blind you, can't they? Even to Jesus.

*Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."*

- "*Thinking he was the gardener*"...Really, she's not far off. You and I were originally created for a Garden, the Garden of Eden. And in His parables, Jesus makes Himself the Owner, the Dresser of the vineyard, the gardener. And here's Mary, on the day of the New Creation, seeing Jesus as the Gardener.
- Death entered the first Garden because Adam thought *he* was the gardener, rather than God. Same with us. And this day death is destroyed, with Mary seeing Christ as the Gardener. How do *you* see Jesus Christ today?

*16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"*

- **The pain from our grief and our tears can keep us from seeing the only One who truly can meet us in our pain.** And when you realize your name is on His lips, you truly see. Are you here hiding grief? Are you covering over pain? Don't let that pain prevent you from seeing Jesus. His desire is to meet you in your grief, in your pain, and carry you through it to the new life, a new depth of relationship with Him.
- But then Jesus says, "*Don't hold on to me...*" Now *that* sounds strange. Is Jesus being uncaring? (I always thought he was supposed to be touchy-feely, like Kum-ba-ya.) But that's not it.
- I think he's saying "This (physical encounter) is not my real presence for you any more. A new relationship will begin, and my Spirit will enter you and be with you always. He says "*Go instead to my brothers...*" Notice that he calls his disciples "*my brothers*." He'd called them friends before, but now they're family! When you put your faith in Jesus, you enter into a whole new family, with God as your heavenly, true Father.
- **Mary's new responsibility was to testify that he's alive!** She was the first one to claim this new job description: "To proclaim that Jesus is God and is alive in 2010. Not just 'the spirit' of Jesus, but the fullness of Jesus is alive!" A job for every mom, dad, aunt, grandma, grandpa, and friend. This is the absolute best kind of occupation. Because of His resurrection it never ends! Jesus was alive, and she was changed! Still today, Jesus is alive, and we too can be changed! Let me ask, have people heard your voice tell it? Have people heard your tones, your mouth, your lips tell it? Jesus is alive! And there's someone who may never hear it, unless they hear it from your mouth, because of who you are. Because God's given you a way to speak it.

*18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

- “*I have seen the Lord.*” She doesn’t describe him, or defend herself, or analyze her feelings. “*I have seen the Lord, and this is what he said to me.*”
- **He rose.** If it is true, there’s nothing left to say. If it is not true, there is nothing left to say. For believers and unbelievers both, life has never been the same again. For some, neither has death.
- If you think about it, Mary was the second person raised from the dead that morning. Death isn’t the end! Jesus has come to you today to offer you real life and the adventure that awaits. He offers you “a new hope” and a love of another kind. All fear is gone.

Some of you are here because it’s Mother’s Day. Love your mom. And honor her, by honoring the One who created her. There are people in your life who are like Mary: a breath away, a few heartbeats away from hearing the voice of Jesus. May His Way, His Truth, His Life, come to them, spoken on your lips. Amen!

## STUDY GUIDE

### Acts 2 – 6

Luke, who wrote both Luke & Acts, continues with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the history of the early church.

**Monday: Read Acts 2. The Holy Spirit Comes.** Pentecost & the Coming of the Holy Spirit (1-13). Many Jews came from all over the world to celebrate the Hebrew festival of Pentecost in Jerusalem. They heard the message in their native tongues. There were 3 signs of the coming Spirit: a sudden roaring sound (2), tongues of fire on the 120 gathered there (3), and all began to speak in foreign languages (4). Have you experienced an empowering from God to witness about Christ? How can you be prepared this week? Peter Addresses the Crowd (14-41). Peter quotes the prophet Joel 2:28-32 and preaches how ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ (21). His message includes 5 points: 1). Jesus, the historic person all hearers know, 2). Was crucified and raised from the dead, 3). In accordance with the prophecy, 4). He is God’s Messiah, 5). All who turn and believe on Him will receive remission of sins & be given the Holy Spirit. To repent means to turn away from all other loyalties and affirm allegiance to Jesus. In what ways is this still a challenge for you? When did you make your initial commitment to Christ? The Fellowship of Believers (42-48). What a day! 3,000 people convert to Christ! The key elements are:

apostles’ teaching,	fellowship	breaking of bread,
prayer,	awe,	signs & wonders,
believers together,	generosity,	God growing them.

What elements are we seeing at our church? What elements are weak or missing? *What will you do about it?* (Please email me your thoughts and impressions: Matt@dexterumc.org).

**Tuesday: Read Acts 3. A Healing Miracle.** Peter Heals the Crippled Beggar (1-10). How is Jesus healing some crippled area of your life? Would you do what Peter did, or would you ask John for a dime? Why? Peter’s Message to the Crowd (11-26). The crowd is amazed, and Peter deflects their awe to God. (12). Have you repented? How has turning from an old sinful way “blessed” you?

**Wednesday: Read Acts 4. The First Persecution.** Peter & John Before the Sanhedrin (1-22). The Sanhedrin is the governing body of Judea. Understandably, they are greatly disturbed at the message of Jesus’ resurrection. (They were responsible for Jesus’ death). What is the most persecution you have faced as a Christ-follower? How has knowing Jesus shaped your character, that people notice you have “been with Jesus?” The Believers’ Prayer (23-31). The community welcomes Peter and John, and they turn to God in prayer. God is addressed as “Sovereign Lord.” All the rulers were powerless to thwart God’s will. Does this comfort you? They pray for boldness. In times of trouble, do you respond more like the Sanhedrin (trying to figure out for yourself what to do), or like the disciples (coming to God in earnest prayer)? The Believers Share their Possessions (32-37). This first threat drew the believers even closer together in a demonstration of selfless love, in “one heart & one mind.” What would have to change for our church to share like this?

**Thursday: Read Acts 5. Early Church Challenges. Hypocrisy (1-11).** This is a weird account! Internal tensions in the young church held the greatest danger to the prayer and love in the community. One couple sells their land and agree together to lie. This hypocrisy and dishonesty is serious, and God acts and judges Annanias and Sapphira immediately. Do you find it easy to ignore the fact that God is in the midst of His people? The Apostles Heal Many & are Persecuted (12-42). Even though there was great respect for the Christ-followers, there was jealousy on the part of the authorities. The disciples reply “We must obey God rather than people!” rings through the ages. What is the ultimate authority in your life? When does it create problems for you? Would you stick with this if you were sent to jail for your faith? Why does God deliver some from hardships, while other times allowing hardships to happen?

**Friday: Read Acts 6. Challenges. Administrative Challenges (1-7).** As the church grew, it faced growing pains, and some vital jobs were left undone. What secondary issues do you see that hinder our church from fulfilling the Acts 1:8 commission? (Again, email me!) Have you stepped up in some way, like the 7 did here? Stephen Seized (8-15). Stephen was full of “grace & power.” What 2 adjectives best describe your spiritual life? What would be different if you were full of “grace and power?”