

Text: John 20:11-18. Six Months Until Easter.

**October 21, 2018.**

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

What are you expecting on Easter? Well, I certainly wasn't expecting Easter today, in October! Glad that we can go beyond your expectations. But what do you expect on Easter? A big meal, crowded restaurant, long lines? I would guess you can have a big meal at a restaurant today and get a table without a reservation. Glad we can go beyond your expectations. Maybe Easter's always a little uneasy. The family tensions resurface. You mess things up because you want to go to worship before the family get together. Well, today, as always, you are part of a perfect family. Jesus is going to call you, "brother!" Imagine that! A perfect brother! And one who doesn't shame you with his perfection, but one who gives you his perfection and says, "Sister, I will always love you!" There's a family beyond expectations! And on top of that, every person here is another member of that perfect family. Look around. Here are accepting aunts, self-sacrificing siblings, going above and beyond brothers. And we haven't even gotten to the best part of Easter, the resurrection! Jesus rose from the dead. So you will rise from the dead. That's beyond expectations! Jesus is alive so you will be alive forever and ever! Jesus has gone to heaven and he's got a perfect place, a monogrammed mansion, just waiting! Talk about going beyond expectations! Yes, Easter goes beyond expectations. Easter goes beyond expectations. That's why we don't just celebrate it once a year, or even twice a year. We celebrate Easter, Jesus' resurrection, every Sunday. Easter goes beyond expectations!

Easter went way beyond expectations for the woman we have up front almost every service. The center panel of our triptych portrays this real life scene from the Bible. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus. She was expecting to find a dead Jesus. What would you expect to find at a tomb? What would you expect if you have helped to bury someone? A dead body! That's what Mary expected. But when she got there, there was no dead body. There was no Jesus! That was way below her expectations. No Jesus! Then she saw two angels! Who ever expects to see angels? Ever! They were announcing good news, the best news ever: Jesus is risen! He's alive! But Mary didn't expect that. Would you expect that? Maybe it seems strange to us that Mary was crying, on Easter, while listening to angels proclaim good news! But try to put yourself in Mary's shoes. Try to expect what she was expecting. She wasn't expecting angels, or resurrection, or Jesus alive! She was so distraught, she was weeping, wailing, loudly, emotionally, sincerely, expressively. Can you blame her?

Can you blame her for not recognizing Jesus? She was expecting to see the dead body of Jesus. She did not expect to see Jesus alive! Easter went so beyond her expectations, she couldn't even see it. Now, before we scold Mary for not recognizing Jesus, let's consider a few things from the Scriptures and our experience. For one, she wasn't expecting to see Jesus. Two, many times after Jesus' resurrection, people didn't recognize him, even Jesus' own friends. Mary Magdalene was no different. Three, some times Jesus intentionally hid his true identity. Why? Jesus wanted people to believe in his Word. On one occasion after his resurrection, Jesus taught an entire Bible class, covering the entire Old Testament, before he let people see who he was. His Word made him known. His Word set hearts on fire. Four, Jesus did not want people to rely on seeing Jesus himself. Jesus wanted people to believe in him without seeing. Once after his resurrection Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And let's not forget for Mary, her grief, her tears, her loud wailing, her expectations, kept her

from recognizing Jesus. She was expecting the gardener. She was not expecting Jesus. She was expecting to carry away a dead body. She was not expecting to see a living Savior.

What about your expectations? Clouded by grief like Mary. "I just can't see how Jesus would let mom suffer so much, die so young. I just can't see why I have to be in the hospital, be so sick, hurt so bad. Where is Jesus?" I would think you expect to see Jesus here at church, but my next door neighbor? He's just a guy I wave to. The parents at dance class? They just add to the commotion and crowd. I'm supposed to see Jesus and share Jesus then and there? Come on, Pastor, it's natural to have doubts. Do you really expect me to believe that a dead guy rose? Think about that! Have you ever seen it? You've done a few funerals. Has the loved one ever sat up in the casket? Resurrection? Really? Yeah, it's natural to have doubts. Doubts are sinful and sin is natural to all of us.

So Jesus' Word makes him known. Jesus' Word makes known to us a perfect Savior. Who shared his perfection with all of us. You are perfect. That has to be beyond expectations. Jesus' Word makes known to us a sacrificial Savior, who went to the cross, who shed his blood, who gave his life. It's at the cross that God goes beyond our expectations. Every sin is forgiven! You are loved forever and ever. And ever! God sees no sin when he looks at me. Not one. God has no doubts when he looks at you. There's no doubt he loves you. No doubt he forgives you. No doubt in his mind, you are holy. How do we know beyond the shadow of a doubt? Jesus rose! There's always an exclamation mark at the end of that sentence. Jesus rose! Talk about going beyond expectations! We don't worship a dead guy. We worship a living Savior. What makes being a Christian different? Jesus is alive. Jesus rose! Whatever expectation you might have, Easter goes beyond, above and beyond. Perfection? Check! Forgiveness? Check. Perfect and eternal life? Check! Jesus made this known in his Word. Jesus made this personal in his Word. With these words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Jesus applied his love and forgiveness and eternal life to you. Easter day is the day of Jesus' resurrection, a day we celebrate every Sunday. Your baptism day is your personal resurrection, a day you get to celebrate every day. Just by calling your name, Jesus made himself known to you. How beyond expectation is that! Just by calling her name, "Mary." Jesus made himself known to her. Just think, that one word and the tears were dried. One word and the veil of grief was gone. One word, and the shroud over her heart was shattered. Jesus' Word makes himself known.

And it only took one word of Mary to show she knew exactly who he was. Rabboni! This was more than the usual word, "Rabbi," or ordinary teacher. This was Rabboni. A term for a higher position, with more respect. A term that showed something personal. Can you blame Mary for wanting to hang on to her Rabboni? Wouldn't you? You expected to find him dead. Then you can't find him at all. Now he's alive! Yeah, grab on, cling on, never let go! But Jesus wanted to go beyond that expectation, for Mary to hold him down on earth. Jesus wanted to lift Mary up to heaven. Jesus didn't want Mary's eyes to stay on earth. Jesus wanted Mary's eyes to lift to heaven. The point of Jesus' resurrection is not that we drag Jesus back down to earth, but that Jesus lift us up to heaven. That we go where he has gone. That where he is, we also may be, where it's perfect, where there are no tears, or suffering or sadness or sickness, but only Jesus, only God's love. That's beyond our expectations.

And as if Mary's mind wasn't already blown and as if her doubts of her heart weren't already blasted away, Jesus said an amazing word, beyond expectations, for the first time. Go to my brothers. Brothers. This is the first time Jesus called them brothers. How cool! How beyond expectations. Jesus had called them friends and followers, but never brothers. Jesus didn't call them traitors who bailed on him when

Jesus needed them most. Jesus didn't call them chickens who left at the first sign of trouble. Even though that very day, the first Easter, on Easter of all days, these guys were hiding in fear behind locked doors, Jesus didn't call them, "Scaredy cats." Jesus called them, "Brothers." Brothers, it doesn't matter your doubts. Jesus is happy to have you in the family. Sisters, it doesn't matter your fears, Jesus is delighted to call you, "Sister." Brothers and sisters, it doesn't matter your grief, your tears, how unbelievable the resurrection, how low your expectations, Jesus calls you, "Brother." Jesus calls you, "Sister." That's way beyond expectations.

That's news that has to be shared. And that's what Jesus told Mary to do. Go and tell. And Mary went with the news. How do I say this? The word the Bible uses for Mary going with the news sounds like the word angel. And this word is used only once in the entire New Testament! Mary angelled the news. This word isn't used for the angels. Not the angels at Easter. Not the angels at Christmas. Mary got to be the angel. Mary got to angel the news. In the 1985 years since this first Easter, God has sent people to angel the news. Jesus sends people to be his angels. Were you expecting this morning to be called an angel? My mom certainly never called me that when I went to church as a child. And yet, here is Jesus himself sending Mary as his angel.

And here is Jesus himself sending you as his angel. You get to be the angel. You get to angel the message. You get to go beyond expectations. I'm willing to say that angelling to 1 million people might be beyond your expectations. Yet that's the goal we have set in our church body. 1 million people being invited to hear the good news this Christmas. I know Christmas is two months away and Easter is six months away. But this good news of great joy can't wait. It needs to be spread. It needs to be angelled. And God wants you to do it. Actually, if every member in our church body angelled to just three people to worship on Christmas Eve, we will have angelled to 1 million people. Can you imagine? 1 million people? 1 million people hearing the good news! One million people wiping away tears, grief gone, hearts happy. And you get to be the angel. You get to angel the message, "The Lord is risen!" He is risen indeed! That's way beyond expectations. Amen.