

Summary

Are you ready for some good news?! Jesus is alive, and because He is alive everything has changed. The first man Adam was born such that He could live forever, but He died. Jesus was a second Adam. He's really God, but He's really human and though He could live forever, He chose to die so that we could live forever.

Getting to Know Each Other

1. Do you have any noteworthy (humorous, ironic, etc.) stories of being mistaken for someone else or mistaking another person for someone they were not?

Leader's Guide:

This is an opportunity for your group to laugh together and reflect on one of the themes from the sermon – how Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener and He surprised her when He called her name.

Examples from your group could include if people have ever said they resemble a celebrity or if they thought someone else was their parent in a store when they were a kid, etc.

Getting into the Bible

Read John 20:11-18

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "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.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

2. Based on these passages what can we gather about Mary Magdalene? What was her relationship to Jesus like? What can we piece together about her story?

Read Luke 8:1-3

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Mark 15:40-41

40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Leader's Notes:

- Some have mistakenly confused Mary Magdalene for the sinful, adulterous woman of Luke 7, which is erroneous.
 - We do know that Mary was delivered from 7 demons and she was one of the women at the cross. It seems that she was a woman of means and that she loved Jesus deeply.
 - Her deep love for Jesus was surely one of the reasons she was at the tomb of Jesus "while it was still dark."
 - Evidently the embalming work had been cut short because of rigorous Sabbath observance.
 - "It is a touching fact, and one to be carefully noted, that Mary Magdalene would not leave the sepulchre, when Peter and John went away to their own home. Love to her gracious Master would not her leave the place where he had been laid. Where he was now she could not tell. What had become of him she did not know. But love made her linger about the empty tomb, where Joseph and Nicodemus had lately laid him. Love made her honour the last place where his precious body had been seen by mortal eyes." (J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, 267.)
3. Explore the theme of the garden using these prompts:
- a. How does John employ the theme of the garden?
 - b. How is the theme of the garden used in the opening chapters of the Bible? How does this set the scene for the rest of the Biblical narrative?
 - c. What hope does John hold out in light of this Biblical theme of the garden?

Leader's Guide:

a. John makes the point to include the detail that there was a garden with a tomb in the same area where Jesus was crucified (John 19:41). This on its own may not be enough to suggest John had Genesis 1-3 in mind, but John uses the garden theme several other times in the passion narrative. He has already recalled how Jesus went to the garden with his disciples and Judas knew he would find Jesus there because they went there regularly with Him (18:1-2). Then our passage at hand points out that Mary thought Jesus was the gardener. It is worth noting that John begins his gospel with a reference to the creation narrative in John 1:1. All of this helps us see that John likely had this garden theme and the salvation theme of a Second Adam who would come to restore us to garden fellowship with God and restore to earth to a garden of God.

b. Genesis 2, in particular reveals how God placed the first man in the garden to work it and keep it as his life of worship before God in partnership with Eve, his wife. Sadly, the next chapter answers the question of what is messed up in life, because of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God. The rest of the biblical story, with Romans 5 in particular, shows us how all of us fell into sin through the first sin of Adam, the representative of humanity. In other words, you don't have to teach a child to be selfish or instruct someone to be worried, etc. These things come naturally. We are born in this kind of world and this kind of condition. Worst of all it all separates us from God from birth. But God in His infinite mercy and wisdom had a plan. We see the first promise of this plan in Gen. 3:15. There would be another gardener to come and address the problem the serpent had introduced through Adam. The first Adam failed in His vocation and so God sent a new Adam. He is, however, a victorious Adam. Adam was a gardener and Jesus came as the true, real Gardener.

- c. This is a good place to remind your group of how Pastor Alan contrasted the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Easter...
- i. Eden was a place of death, in the end, but Easter was a day of life springing up.
 - ii. Man fell in Eden, but the One True Man rose on Easter and with Him a new humanity rose from the dead.
 - iii. Eden was a place of truth invaded by a lie, but Easter brings truth that reigns.
 - iv. Eden was a place of hiddenness as Adam and Even hid from God, but Jesus revealed Himself and made a way for us to be accepted and open with God on Easter.
 - v. Eden was a place where Eve, though she was born without sin, she became a sinner. But in the Easter Garden sinners who accept Christ are forgiven of their sins and become saints of the Most High God.
 - vi. Though we were all born in the First Adam, all those who trust in Christ is born anew into a new race of humanity through the New Adam.
 - vii. Everything that Jesus as the New Gardner has accomplished is ours in Christ!
 - viii. We are no longer banished from the garden but invited to come and eat of the tree of life.

Application

4. Reflect on this excerpt from the sermon: "...What are you sad about? What is it that you are longing for in your life? Where is your point of deepest need? What is the real problem in your life? And whom are you seeking? To whom are you going for answers? To where? To what are you looking in order to try and solve the deepest problems of your life...Jesus still asks these questions...where is your point of need? ... what are you grieving?...where are you looking for life?"

Leader's Guide:

These are deep, probing, revealing questions. Encourage your group to take some time 3-5 minutes to reflect and write down some notes in response. You may want to have some paper and pens on hand for them. Ask them to use it as a time to be honest with themselves and God. Give them the opportunity to share with the group, but also encourage them to share what they have seen with one trusted person this week who can pray for them.

You could use this as an opportunity to do "one word prayers" together as a group. Invite the group to read these prompts with all the ways Jesus satisfies us in mind. Then have group prayer where folks from the group just say one word about Jesus, who He is and the life He brings.