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Recommended Citation

Baart, Aaron, "Easter: She Called Him "Rabboni"" (2015). *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List*. Paper 360.

http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/360

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Easter: She Called Him "Rabboni"

Abstract

Posting about the resurrection story from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/easter-she-called-him-rabboni/>

Keywords

In All Things, Easter, resurrection, belief and doubt

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

Easter: She Called Him “Rabboni”

 [all in allthings.org/easter-she-called-him-rabboni/](https://allthings.org/easter-she-called-him-rabboni/)

Aaron Baart

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 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.—John 20:11-18

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry so many clear and obvious themes emerge: his healing of those who are broken, his concern for those in the margins, his obsession with his Father's kingdom. And yet, following the resurrection, the only thing Jesus' appearances to his followers seem to have in common is that all of them have nothing in common. Peter receives a threefold restoration to match his threefold denial. John, who we now know is a faster runner than Peter (see John 20:4), is said to have believed as soon as he saw the linen strips that formerly bound Jesus (20:8). The majority of the disciples meet the resurrected Christ while locked behind closed doors, only to have him prove his identity with the scars in his hands and sides. Strangely, after this he breathes on them in a sort of re-creation moment reminiscent of the Creation account in Genesis 2. Just as the Father had breathed life into man's lungs to start the story, Jesus breathes new life into the disciples on the other side of the grave. Then there is Thomas. Thomas is typically associated with doubt (e.g. Doubting Thomas) but maybe just maybe, wanting to see the tangible evidence of Christ's resurrection is more a model of faith than doubt, something we should all aspire to.

The only other character in John's Gospel to encounter Jesus after the resurrection is Mary Magdalene. Mary's encounter is also unique. At first, she doesn't recognize the man who had once cast seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2); the man whose ministry she helped support financially (Luke 8:1-3); who she had seen with her own eyes at the foot of the cross (John 19:25); and even watched be placed in the tomb (Matthew 15:47). Now, in John 20:14-15, even in conversation with the resurrected Jesus, she doesn't yet know who she is interacting with. Shouldn't she have known right away? Finally, it appears to be in the mere mention of her name or maybe the manner in which he said it, that she finally recognizes that this is her dear friend, Jesus.

Despite the confusion caused either by Mary's grief or the slightly different nature of the resurrected Christ, Jesus certainly knows *her*. And Mary finally realizes she isn't conversing with just any gardener. She is conversing with the same voice who spoke the first garden ever into place—the Garden of Eden. The Gardener who once walked in the cool of the day with the first man and now with humankind, ready to be born again. The Gardener whose ultimate garden city will be every followers' home. And so her realization

is made when the same old voice, only now with greater authority, calls her by name. "Mary."

And when the light goes on for Mary, his greeting is returned by an old friend with the name that she had probably called him so many times before, "Rabboni." I'm sure it would have fallen on his ears too, like the warmth of an old friend's embrace. Old friends, united again. Just like old times and yet not at all because now, this friendship can't even be broken by death. Seven demons once owned Mary's life. Now Jesus had not merely chased them out. Rather, he chased them all the way into the heart of hell itself and defeated every last one. His dear friend Mary, whether she knows it yet or not, is freer than she has ever been. She probably hasn't even yet begun to grasp how truly powerful this friend of hers actually is. But if nothing else she now owns the first human voice to proclaim, on the other side of Jesus' victory over death, "I have seen the Lord!"

As you celebrate Easter today, may the voice of the resurrected Jesus be an old familiar one to you too. And because of his resurrection, may his voice and his face, on the day you meet him on the other side of the grave in the garden city, be the sweetest sound in the world. Happy Easter!