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A Journey of Faith

He has risen!  
Luke 24:6



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- Reflect on the past and prepare for the future
- Learn from and encourage one other
- Jointly seek God's direction for the future
- Pray and plan for greater things

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*Editorial*



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

## **Resurrection Hope Against Burial Discrimination**

“Convert to Hinduism or get boycotted from the village.”

These words, delivered to Christians in Balasore, Odisha last month, reveal the harsh reality many believers face across India today. As we prepare to celebrate Christ's victory over death this Easter, our brothers and sisters in Odisha and adjoining Chhattisgarh struggle for the basic dignity of burying their dead. A recent fact-finding mission documented how village authorities denied burial rights to believers. In Nabarangpur district, four Christians reportedly had to participate in Hindu rituals simply to lay their 70-year-old patriarch to rest.

Yet Easter speaks directly to this suffering. Christ's

resurrection transforms how we understand these experiences and offers hope amid persecution.

The officials who sealed Jesus' tomb thought they had ended His life, ministry and influence. But the stone rolled away. When authorities deny our dead proper burial, we remember Jesus faced this indignity too. His empty tomb declares that those who control burial grounds cannot determine our eternal destiny.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). Our present suffering participates in Christ's journey through death to resurrection.

In many places across India, Christians face impossible choices - renounce faith or lose community. The "Under Caesar's Sword" research project reveals this happens worldwide, with believers responding through survival, association, and confrontation. Some adapt worship practises while maintaining faith. Others build alliances with civil society groups to advocate for constitutional protections. Some directly challenge unjust structures through legal means or peaceful protest.

Christians in Balasore demonstrate remarkable courage. Despite threats and boycotts, they continue worshipping. Their persistence testifies that human opposition cannot thwart God's purposes. When some voices in our society suggest that authentic Indian identity is tied to particular religious traditions, Easter demolishes this claim. Christ's resurrection establishes a community that transcends all human divisions. Paul declares, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

For us in India, where caste, religion, and socioeconomic status divide communities, resurrection creates a new belonging based not on human categories but on Christ's inclusive love.

How do we live as resurrection people amid these challenges? First, we find courage in apparent defeat. Between Good Friday and Easter Sunday comes Silent Saturday - a time of waiting and uncertainty like many of our communities experience. Easter assures us God works powerfully even when circumstances appear darkest.

Christ calls us to actively preserve what is good and illuminate truth amid darkness as salt and light. We contribute to our nation's common good while modelling communities based on inclusive love. Our response to hostility must reflect Easter's message - love overcomes hate, life defeats death. The tribal Christians who maintain faithful worship despite threats demonstrate resurrection's power.

Easter reminds us we belong to one body in Christ across

regional, linguistic, and denominational lines. When Christians in Kerala pray for believers in Odisha, or when urban churches support rural communities facing harassment, we embody resurrection unity.

Perhaps most significantly, resurrection hope transforms how we engage with those who persecute us. Christ's first words after rising were "Peace be with you" (John 20:19), not words of vengeance against those who crucified him. This resurrection-shaped peace empowers us to pray for those who oppose us and seek reconciliation rather than retaliation. The cruciform pattern of dying to hostility and rising to peace offers a uniquely Christian witness in our polarised society.

The theological concept of "cruciform witness" developed by Christian thinkers offers a framework for understanding our present struggles. It suggests that when Christians face persecution without resorting to violence or hatred, they participate in Christ's own pattern of redemptive suffering. Our nonviolent

resistance to injustice becomes not merely a political strategy but a living testimony to resurrection power.

As we celebrate Christ's resurrection, remember our sisters and brothers gathering in difficulty. Their faithful persistence gives deeper meaning to Easter's victory. The fact-finding team concluded their report by calling for "communal harmony and peace," promoting dialogue, constitutional values, and secularism. These aspirations align with resurrection's promise of reconciliation - God's intent to restore all that is broken in our nation.

We worship this Easter not because circumstances are favourable, but because Christ conquered death itself. The persecution we face today cannot prevail against the power that rolled away the stone.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. This changes everything for us in India.

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**

*Editor in Chief – AIM Magazine*



# BEYOND THE CROSS

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Athletes strip down to essential clothing to not be burdened with unnecessary weight. In the same way, when our Lord became incarnate, He stripped down for His time on earth (Phil.2:6-8). He laid aside His glory so that it wouldn't get in the way of His being human.

The journey that started in heaven, ended on earth in a tomb. The earthly journey was over. But the tomb was not His final destination. All the way stations on earth, including the last one, were no more than stopovers. There was one more station to reach as the journey was round-trip. The journey would end only when He would get back to the starting point. When Jesus got back to start, His all-powerful, eternally significant effort was over.

Just as Jesus had to strip down to descend to earth, He had to dress up to return to heaven. That is the significance of His resurrection from the dead: "As to His divine holiness, He was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death" (Rom.1:4, GNB).

The Lord Jesus came back to life and walked around among old acquaintances before going back to heaven. The biblical description of Christ's resurrection is clearly not saying that Jesus "lives on" in some unreal, mystical sort of way in the way "*Gandhi amar ha!*" (Gandhi is undying). Everyone knows that isn't true.

Nor is the account of the Resurrection a mythical story with some sort of spiritual

meaning. It is not a piece of fiction. It is not a fable with a moral. It is not a legend. It is historical.

Those who idolise science, treating it like a sacred cow, imagine that all proof has to be scientific. The methodology of science involves experimentation based on the notion that if someone gets a certain result from an experiment, if true, other scientists should be able to repeat the experiment and get the same results. But history does not lend itself to experiments. Historical events happen at a particular point in time, and they cannot be repeated. Thus, it is that there is no scientific proof that India won its independence on August 15th, 1947. We cannot prove that it was won without a bloody war to defeat and throw out foreign rulers, but was won through Satyagraha and *ahimsa*. That cannot be proved by experiment.

### **Examining History**

As it is a historical event, the Resurrection can be proved by simply examining the historical documents about it:

- Literary evidence: The four gospels read like four news reports. There was no

"Passover Plot" (as one writer suggested). The gospel writers didn't doctor their reports to make their stories fit. They told it the way they saw it or remembered it.

- Psychological evidence: In a personal anecdote, no one depicts himself/herself in an entirely negative way. Yet Matthew, Peter (author of Mark) and John tell their story in such a way that they are depicted as selfish and cowardly. It was their preoccupation with the big story that made them realize that the truth itself mattered more than their own reputations.
- Sociological evidence: The gospel writers were children of their age. Generally, people observe prevalent cultural norms in all their activities and narrations. According to the values of their time, women were second to men, never regarded as equal to men, nor treated favourably. But in the story of the Resurrection, women come through with flying colours. They are shown to have been the ones brave enough to linger at the cross while the men were the deserters, and it was because of their devotion to their dead leader that women were the



first to see the Risen Jesus. If it was a made-up story, the men would have had the stellar roles, instead.

- **Historical evidence:** If a government wants to stop a movement, it simply isolates or kills the leader. With the Crucifixion, Christ's disciples were a defeated lot. They were timid and fearful, people who met behind closed doors after dark. Men, who had deserted their Master when He needed them the most, suddenly became brave enough to publicly confess their allegiance to Jesus. Whence the courage, unless they derived it from having seen Jesus alive, and experiencing the dynamic of the Spirit of the Risen Jesus, imparting the power to go on with the Lord's mission?

### **Discipling Again**

During vacations, people are forced to live out of suitcases, but tire of it soon and just want to get back home. Having lived as a trainee for thirty years and worked hard on the job for three years, why didn't Jesus rush back home to His Father on completion of His mission? The answer is, He stayed on to rebuild the faith of His discouraged disciples.

During the forty days after His crucifixion, He appeared to the apostles from time to time, and He proved to them in many ways that He was truly alive. And He talked to them about the Kingdom of God. Once when He was eating with them, He commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before" (Acts 1:3-4, NLT).

While the women had remained loyal and devoted throughout the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, they too were without faith. They didn't believe or think that Jesus would come back to life. They were fearful. All they had left was a devotion to a beloved, dead leader. They needed to be encouraged and strengthened so that they would serve as witnesses to Jesus being alive.

All of the disciples had deserted Jesus when He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had to restore the deserters to discipleship and ministry if His mission was to go on.

The first time Jesus appeared among the disciples, Thomas was not present. When the others told him that they had seen Jesus, he refused to believe their

story. He expressed doubt and laid down conditions for him to come to belief.

While lots of people claim to have honest doubts that prevent belief, they don't do what Thomas did. He waited for Jesus to make a second appearance. He didn't give up on waiting for Jesus after the first few days. He kept on waiting for eight days (Jn.20:24-29). It would appear from this that in all his doubting, he did nurture a longing and willingness to believe. That's what an honest doubter is like. He is neither a sceptic, nor a rebel. He honestly has doubts, and because he is honest, he wants to find answers to his doubts.

Of all the disciples, Peter probably felt the most agony and shame. He had been the one who was most bombastic about being loyal to Jesus. He had sworn boastfully and vehemently that he would remain faithful even if all the others ran away (Mk.14:27-31). The Lord not only prayed for his endurance (Lk.22:31-32) but warned him and the others of their need to get their strength for the battle through prayer (Mk.13:33-37; Lk.22:40).

Peter could have turned his back on Jesus permanently, like Judas. After all, it was about

denying Him that Jesus had said, "Whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven" (Matt.10:33, NRSV). When the Lord turned and looked into his eyes, he cried bitterly. Even though the Greek text says that Peter recalled what the Lord had said, the King James Version draws attention to the fact by repeating the idea that Peter reflected on what he had done and that was what made him cry: "And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, 'Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice'. And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mk.14:72).

Peter could have easily descended into hopeless despair. But the Lord made it a point to specify that Peter was to be personally informed that He had risen (Mk. 16:7). Peter hung around with the other disciples. The Lord met with him privately (1 Cor.15:5) and in the end, Jesus gave him an opportunity to reverse his three denials with three public affirmations of love for Jesus, and the Lord in turn charged him thrice with the care of His flock (Jn.21:15-21).

The people the Lord restored to faith were just like us: the blindly devoted, the deserters, the

doubter, and the denier. The Lord is the Lord of the Second Chance (and the third, and the fourth...*ad infinitum*). He promised that He wouldn't cast out anyone who comes to Him (Jn. 6:37), because He won't break the bruised reed or snuff out the smouldering wick (Matt. 12:20). Those are very precious promises that I cling to. They assure me again and again of grace abundant and hope eternal though I know myself to be such a lousy follower of Christ.

**Delegating the Ongoing Mission**  
After the Resurrection, Jesus began handing over His mission to His disciples. He had inaugurated and financed the mission by paying the cost of saving people. His part was over. But the mission would be incomplete if those He had already transformed would not be able to function like Him in communicating the message of salvation till the whole world would be reached with the good news.

With this in view, the Holy Spirit was imparted to empower forgiveness: "Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the

Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven'" (Jn.20:19-23)

Many Christians think that the Holy Spirit came into the world only on the day of Pentecost. That's not true. The Holy Spirit has been active in the world from the beginning. Genesis 1:2 says that God's Spirit was brooding over the earth [like a mother bird]. In Noah's days God came to the decision that His Spirit would not struggle with humankind (6:2). Every prophet and psalmist had been inspired by God's Spirit. Jesus Himself had earlier talked of the Holy Spirit being already with the disciples, though not in them (Jn.14:17).

God had breathed into Adam and Eve, and they became spiritual beings with the likeness of God (Gen.2:7). When Jesus breathed on His disciples, He was duplicating what God had done at creation. Jesus was inaugurating His new creation. If the Spirit was not received on that occasion, then we imply that Jesus merely pretended to give them the Holy

Spirit, and a hypocrite Jesus was not.

## **Reborn**

Being born anew or becoming a Christian begins with being reconciled to God. Receiving God's forgiveness is integral to reconciliation with God. But according to Jesus, receiving God's forgiveness is tied to our being people who forgive (Matt.6:12,14-15; 18:22-35).

By nature we are vengeful. We want to hit back at those who abuse or hurt us. That is instinctive. But to forgive we need help. The Pharisees who were critical of Jesus were right: only God can forgive (Mk.2:7).

Jesus imparted the power to forgive straightaway after His Resurrection. He wanted His disciples to be a forgiving people even before they became preachers who proclaimed the forgiveness of God. He wanted them to demonstrate by their lives that the gospel had the power to do what it proclaimed. And so, Jesus breathed on them, gave them the Holy Spirit and told them that from then on they had the authority to forgive. When they forgave people, it would be recorded in heaven. If their

forgiveness was not received, that too would stand recorded in heaven.

The second task Jesus handed over to His disciple was that of preserving the flock. That is what Peter was commissioned to do when he was restored. Each time Peter said that he loved the Lord, he was told to feed the Lord's sheep. But the task was not exclusive to Peter. He was representative of all the other disciples. (See this aspect in the case of the Lord saying that sins forgiven by disciples would stand forgiven in heaven: Matt.16:19 with Jn.20:23).

There had to be a community of faith not only exemplifying the gospel's power and effect, but also to enfold the newcomer in the love and care of the community so that they grow strong enough to accept the baton as it was passed on from disciple to disciple.

A community needs leadership (shepherding) and nurture (feeding and care). The stronger brothers and sisters (elders of the community, "not a recent convert"—1 Ti.3:6) are to provide such pastoral care.

The third task was to proclaim the gospel to all fellow-humans. That charge was given by Jesus before His ascension, though they could start the work only after the Holy Spirit would come to empower them to be witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:5-8): "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20, NRSV).

Jesus delegated the responsibility of making disciples for Him to people who were disciples. Disciple-making was Christ's mission and at the end He handed that over to His followers. People were to be drawn to Jesus to make them His followers through initiation and instruction.

When John the Baptist started his ministry, he announced that the Kingdom of God was near (3:2). When Jesus started His work, He too announced the Kingdom (v.17). Later when He

sent His disciples on a mission trip, He told them also to preach the same message about the Kingdom (10:7). In common usage the word "kingdom" refers to the area that a king reigns over. But in the gospels, it is used in the sense of a king's rule or sovereignty.

The whole mission of our Lord was to bring people in rebellion under God's sovereign rule. That is not only what Jesus came to do, but it is also what Jesus wanted His disciples to carry on doing until God's rule is accepted by all people. And that is the final destination for all disciples of Christ Jesus: being under God along with all the people won for Christ Jesus.



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# It was impossible for Jesus to be held in death's power

*"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."*

*Acts 2:24.*

Dr. Chacko Thomas

## **Christianity has a living originator:**

The resurrected Lord Jesus appeared and spoke to His Apostle John saying, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and hades." [Rev. 1:17-18.]. Yes, we follow a living God and Saviour.

In God's providence, I have been studying the book of Acts in recent days with the help of two Commentaries. I was struck by the phrase "since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." [Acts 2:24, NASB].

Briefly commenting on the verse

were Dr H. A. Ironside and Rev John Stott. The latter also commented on how Peter came to see Christ's resurrection in Psalm 16: 8-11. It is something I had wondered too. [Please look up Psalm 16:8-11]

## **John Stott on seeing the Resurrection in Psalm 16:8-11:**

"So, although men had killed Jesus, *God raised him from the dead, and thereby freed him from the agony of death.* 'Agony' means literally 'birth pains', so that his resurrection is pictured as a regeneration, a new birth out of death into life.

"Peter next confirms the truth of the resurrection by appealing to Psalm 16:8-11 in which he

claims, it is foretold. David cannot have been referring to himself, when he wrote that God would not abandon him to the grave or let his Holy One see decay (Acts 2:27), because David had *died and was buried*, and his tomb was still in Jerusalem (2:29). Instead, being a prophet and remembering God's promise to place a distinguished descendant on his throne, "he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ". (Acts 2:30-31).

"Peter's use of the scripture probably sounds strange to us, but we need to bear three points in mind. First, all Scripture bears witness to Christ, especially to his death, resurrection and worldwide mission. That is its character and purpose. Jesus himself said so, both before and after his resurrection. [Lk 4:21; Jn 5:39-40; Lk. 24:27, 44ff.]

"In consequence, secondly, not least because of Jesus' post-resurrection teaching, his disciples came naturally to see Old Testament references to God's anointed or king, to David and his royal seed, as finding their fulfilment in Jesus [Ps. 2:8; 16:10; 110:1.] That is what Dom Jacques Dupont has called, 'the

radically Christological character of early Christian exegesis.

"And, thirdly, once this foundation is granted, a Christian use of the Old Testament like Peter's use of Psalm 16 is 'scrupulously logical and internally coherent. Having quoted these verses from Psalm 16 and applied them to the resurrection of Jesus, Peter adds: *God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact* (32). Thus, the spoken testimony of the apostles and the written prediction of the prophets converged. Or, as we would say, the Old and New Testament Scriptures coincided in their witness to the resurrection of Christ."

### **C. H. Spurgeon: Why was it "impossible for Him to be held in death's power"?**

Mr. Spurgeon preached on Acts 2:24 on March 28, 1880. He entitled it "Bonds Which Could Not Hold". I hope to pick up a few points for us from his powerful message, now in print. Please see the link below for the full message, which is 14 pages long, it is worth the time and effort.

"I. I am now going to speak upon the fact mentioned in the text, that

IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BONDS OF DEATH SHOULD HOLD OUR LORD. God raised him up, "having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Why was it impossible that the bonds of death should hold Christ? There are several reasons; the first is, that *Christ had in himself the inherent power to die, and to live again*. I will not enlarge upon this truth, but simply give you our Lord's own words concerning it: "Therefore, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." {Jn. 10:17-18]

"Now, in the realms of the dead, before that time, there had never been seen any person who had the inherent power to take up his life again. Neither had there ever been one who had possessed the inherent power to lay down his life when he pleased, for no mere man has ever been the absolute master of his own life; so that our Lord Jesus was the first whoever

entered the portals of the tomb bearing within himself the power to rise again whenever he pleased."

Next, *the dignity of His person* rendered it impossible ... a third one. It was not possible that the dead Christ should be held by the bonds of death any longer than the third morning *because his redeeming work was done*. Remember — and oh! how well some of you know it, and how gladly do you welcome it! — that the reason why Jesus died was because he took the sin of his people upon himself; and being found in the sinner's place, he had to suffer the sinner's doom, which was death. But after he had endured the penalty, that is, after he had died, and remained the appointed time in the tomb, how could he be held any longer in the grave? After he had said, "It is finished," and after the predestined hours for a full examination of his work before the throne of God had passed, why should he be detained any longer? He was the Hostage for our debt; but when the debt was paid, who could keep him in durance vile? Having borne the penalty, he was free for ever; and so, as Paul writes, "Christ being



raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." In that he has satisfied all the claims of the law of God, what hand can arrest him, what power can hold him captive? He died for our sins, but he rose again for our justification, and his rising proved that all his people were accounted righteous in the sight of God. It was not possible, while there was a just God in heaven, that Christ should remain in the tomb. As his work was done, justice demanded that he should be let go;—

"And now both the Surety and sinner are free."

In the next place, it was not possible that Christ should remain in the tomb because *he had his Father's promise that he should not*. I have already reminded you that David, speaking by inspiration, had said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades;" (the abode of departed spirits;) "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." That promise must be kept, so it was not possible that Christ should remain in the grave beyond the appointed period; indeed, this was part of

the Father's purpose and plan, and an essential part of the great work of the redemption of his elect, that he who died should rise again; and what is in Jehovah's plan and purpose, none shall ever gainsay. When he openeth the door, no man is able to shut it; and where he shutteth up, no man can possibly open. Even Nebuchadnezzar, when he came to his right mind, said concerning the Most High, "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" So, when the Father had purposed and decreed that his Son, Jesus Christ, should not be held any longer by the bonds of death, it was not possible for him to be detained.

Remember, too, dear friends, that there is a fifth reason for Christ's deliverance; that is to be found in *the perpetuity of his offices*. You scarcely need for me to remind you that our Lord Jesus Christ was a priest, but not after the order of the Aaronic priests, for they died, and there was an end of them so far as their priesthood was concerned; but to Christ it was said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." But a man cannot be a priest when he is dead;

therefore, since Christ's is a Melchisedec priesthood, he "is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life;" and, in order that he might have that endless life, it was necessary that he should rise from the dead, — his Melchisedec priesthood required it.

But, to come to the close of this part of our subject, it was not possible, *in the very nature of things*, for Christ to be held by the bonds of death. If he had been, think what the consequences to us would have been; for, first, we should have had no assurance of our own resurrection. The blessed hope that those who have been called away from us, and whose bodies we have committed to the earth, shall rise again, would have been without any substantial foundation. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." When you get the firstfruits of a harvest, you feel certain that the rest of it will be garnered in due time. So, Christ has risen as the first of a great host, and we thus have an assurance, which otherwise we could not have had, but which is

essential to the comfort of Christians.

Only imagine what would have been the consequences to us if that assurance had not been ours. There would have been no evidence of our justification. I might have said, "Yes, Christ took my debt, but how do I know that he paid it? Christ bore my sins, but how do I know that he put them away?" So, if he had never risen from the dead, we should have had no proof that we were justified.

Then, too, if he had never risen, and gone up to heaven in his human body, we should not have had anyone to take possession of heaven on our behalf. Now we have "a man in possession." We have a wondrous Representative before the throne, who has taken seizin and grip of the divine estates. What a joy it is to us to know that he is there to represent us before God!

Further, if Christ's body had remained in the grave, there could have been no reign of Christ, and no sitting down at the right hand of God, as there now is. He would have been in heaven in

the same respect as he is here as God; but there would have been no visible appearance of the representative Man, and the once crucified Redeemer; and the ransomed ones could not have sung, "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," for he would not have been there to hear the song. They might have recollected the sacrifice on Calvary; but he, as the Lamb that had been slain, wearing the marks of his priesthood and death, would not have been there.

II. Now I pass on to my second observation, which is that, AS CHRIST COULD NOT BE HELD BY THE BONDS OF DEATH, HE COULD NOT BE HELD BY ANY OTHER BONDS.

If he was more than a match for death, who or what shall ever be able to stand against him? Death, the slaughterer of all mankind, before whom kings and princes, as well as the meanest of giants their subjects, lie prostrate in the tomb; — death, before whom giants bend as a rush sways to and fro in the wind; — even death is vanquished by Christ. He is the destroyer of destruction, and the death of death; then, what power

can possibly stand in opposition to him? I want to cheer you, dear friends, in these dark and evil days, with a strong belief in our great Master's omnipotence and invincible might. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. With such a hero as he is to lead us on, victory is sure, however stern may be the conflict. ...

III. Now, in closing my discourse, there is a truth upon which I wish to insist with great earnestness; it is this. AS CHRIST COULD NOT BE HELD BY THE BONDS OF DEATH, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO KEEP IN BONDAGE ANYTHING THAT BELONGS TO HIM.

You recollect that, when Pharaoh told Moses that the men among the children of Israel might go into the wilderness to offer sacrifice, he said that they must leave their little ones behind; but Moses would not accept that condition. The next time, Pharaoh said, "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." But Moses answered, "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also

shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind." All that was of Israel was to go with Israel; and that is still our Master's will and way. "Where I am," saith he, "there shall my people be also. If I am in the grave, they must be in the grave, too, buried with me; if I rise, they also shall rise, for I will not rise without them; and if I go to heaven, I will not go without them." This is our joy, and with dear old Rowland Hill we can sing, —

"And this I do find, we two are so joined,  
He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind." ..."

The Lord hath taken an inventory of all that he has bought with his precious blood, and he will have it all, not merely the souls and spirits of his people, but their bodies, too. Who is to stop him? Death knows his power but must yield to it. The strongman armed did keep the sepulchre, but a stronger he came in, and burst open the bands of the tomb, and he came forth alive and

"As the Lord our Saviour rose,  
So, all his followers must;"

for, as it is written, "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and it is not possible that they, who are, as it were, the bones of his mystical body, should be holden by the bonds of death. O happy people, who belong to Christ! God grant that we may all be numbered amongst them, for his great name's sake! Amen.



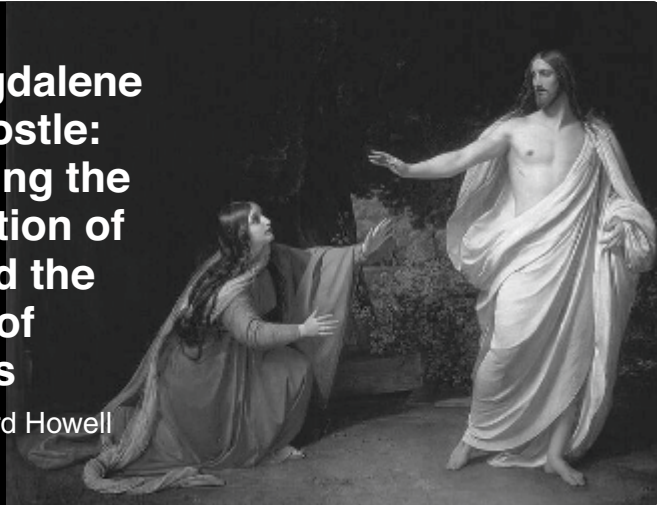
### **Dr. Chacko Thomas**

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And God raised the Lord and will  
also raise us up by his power.  
1 Corinthians 6:14

# Mary Magdalene as an Apostle: Proclaiming the Resurrection of Jesus and the Renewal of All Things

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell



## Introduction

Mary Magdalene is one of the most important figures in the New Testament, especially in the resurrection stories. For many years, church traditions have not fully recognized her role, but in the Gospels, she is the first witness to the risen Christ and the first to tell others about His resurrection. This shows that she was not just a follower of Jesus, but also an apostle—someone sent to share the Good News. This essay will examine the biblical evidence, early Church teachings, and modern theological views to show why Mary Magdalene should be recognized as an apostle.

The resurrection of Jesus brings renewal to all things. As Revelation 21:5 says, "Behold, I

make all things new." These words from God show His plan to redeem the world through Jesus Christ. The resurrection changes everything—turning sadness into joy, death into life, and brokenness into restoration.

## I. Mary Magdalene in the Gospel Narratives

Mary Magdalene is an important character in all four Gospels, especially in the stories of Jesus' death and resurrection. In John 20:11-18, she is the first person to see the risen Christ, and He tells her to go and tell the disciples:

"Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20:17, NIV).

This means she was the first to announce the resurrection, which is the foundation of Christian faith. The word **apostolos** in Greek means "one who is sent," and Jesus sends Mary to share this message.

In **Matthew 28:1-10**, Mary Magdalene and another Mary receive a message from an angel at Jesus' tomb:

"Go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee'" (Matthew 28:7, NIV).

Later, Jesus appears to them and tells them again to share the news. Luke 24:11 also shows that the male disciples did not believe the women's message at first, which highlights how Mary Magdalene was given an important mission despite the cultural attitudes toward women at that time.

## **II. The Power of Resurrection: A New Beginning**

The resurrection of Jesus is God's way of bringing new life. When Jesus rose, He defeated sin and death, making it possible for people to experience a transformed life. As St. Paul says

in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

No matter how difficult life is, the resurrection shows that God can bring new hope. The disciples were full of fear and sadness after Jesus died, but after they saw the risen Christ, their sorrow turned into joy. Because the tomb was empty, we know that Jesus gives us freedom from sin and death.

## **III. The Early Church and Mary Magdalene's Apostolic Role**

The early Church Fathers knew that Mary Magdalene had an important role, though not all of them called her an apostle. St. Augustine (354–430) called her the "Apostle to the Apostles" (*apostola apostolorum*) because she was the first to proclaim Christ's resurrection to the disciples.

Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235) also wrote about her faithfulness, especially compared to the male disciples who ran away during the crucifixion. He emphasized that Mary was the first preacher of the resurrection (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*).

However, Mary Magdalene's role as an apostle was later misunderstood. In the 6th century, Pope Gregory I incorrectly said that she was a repentant prostitute. This mistake lasted for many centuries and hid her true role as a faithful disciple. Today, biblical scholars have corrected this view and have restored her reputation as one of Jesus' closest followers.

#### **IV. God's Promise: A Renewed Creation**

When God says in Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new," this is not just about individuals, but about the whole world. The resurrection is the beginning of God's great renewal plan.

In Romans 8:21, Paul writes that "creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." Just as Jesus' body was transformed when He rose from the dead, all creation will one day be made new.

#### **V. Living the New Life in Christ**

The resurrection is not just an event we remember; it is a way of life. When Jesus appeared to His

disciples after rising from the dead, He gave them the Holy Spirit and sent them to continue His mission (John 20:21-22).

Mary Magdalene's story challenges the Church to think about leadership and ministry. Jesus Himself chose a woman to be the first preacher of His resurrection, which means leadership in the Church should be based on faith and calling, not just on tradition or gender.

#### **VI. Mary Magdalene and Contemporary Christian Ministry**

Mary Magdalene's role in the resurrection story has an important message for today's Church. If Jesus gave her the most important message in Christian history, then the Church should support women in leadership and ministry.

On July 22, 2016, Pope Francis raised the feast day of Mary Magdalene to the level of a "Feast," which is the same honor given to other apostles. This was an important step in recognizing her true role. In Protestant and Orthodox churches, many leaders are also recognizing that Mary Magdalene is a great

example of faith and evangelism. Her story encourages both men and women to share the Gospel with boldness, no matter what society thinks.

### **Conclusion**

Mary Magdalene's role in the resurrection story makes her a true apostle—one sent by Christ to share the Good News. Even though history has often misunderstood her, her testimony is at the center of the Christian faith.

Her story calls the Church to recognize that Christ's mission includes all people, regardless of gender. As the first preacher of the resurrection, she is a powerful witness to the life-changing truth of Jesus' victory over death and the renewal of all things.

### **Lessons We Learn from Mary Magdalene**

- **Faithfulness is rewarded** – Mary Magdalene remained with Jesus even when others left. Her faithfulness led to her being the first witness of the resurrection.
- **God values all people** – Jesus chose a woman to be the first messenger of the resurrection, showing that

God calls both men and women to serve Him.

- **The resurrection changes everything** – Just as Mary's grief turned into joy, the resurrection of Jesus brings hope to all situations.
- **Sharing the Good News is for everyone** – Mary Magdalene was not an official disciple, yet she was sent to tell others about Jesus. Every believer has a role in spreading the Gospel.
- **God can correct misunderstandings** – History misrepresented Mary Magdalene, but modern scholars have restored her true identity. Likewise, God can bring truth and justice to any situation.



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# The Resurrection of Faith: Navigating Loss and Doubt

Dr. Maleeta Angelina Goddard

Have you ever experienced the profound pain of losing someone you love? It's a feeling that shakes the very foundation of our beliefs and can leave us questioning everything we hold dear. In this paper, I want to explore the emotional turmoil that comes with loss, particularly in the context of faith, and how such experiences can shape our understanding of life and spirituality and how it helps us to rebuild our faith again.

When we lose someone who has played a significant role in our lives someone who has taught us valuable lessons, shared countless moments of joy, and offered unwavering support it can be devastating. The death of a loved one often plunges us into a deep chasm of grief, and in these moments, our faith can feel

fragile, even non-existent. Everything around us seems to shatter, and we find ourselves staring into a future that feels dark and uncertain.

I often reflect on the profound emotions that the disciples must have experienced when they witnessed the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. Here was a man who embodied love, compassion, and truth, yet he was subjected to unimaginable cruelty. The Roman soldiers, known for their brutality, operated within a highly stratified society where power dynamics were stark. The Roman Empire was on the rise, and its influence over the Jewish people created a complex and often painful backdrop for their lives.

Imagine being a part of a

community that has long awaited the arrival of a messiah a powerful leader who would liberate them from oppression. This hope is rooted deeply in tradition, and the anticipation of a saviour who would restore their dignity and freedom is palpable. However, the reality of Jesus' crucifixion shattered those expectations. Instead of triumph, there was despair, and the followers of Jesus were left contending with their faith in a man who had promised them salvation.

The Gospels paint a vivid picture of the disciples' fear and confusion in the wake of Jesus' death. They hid away, terrified that they might share the same fate. Their hopes crumbled as they faced the stark reality of loss. Did they ever really believe that Jesus would rise again? Despite his many hints and direct statements about his resurrection, the Gospels reveal a troubling truth: the disciples struggled to grasp this fundamental aspect of their faith. When Mary discovered the empty tomb and shared the news of Jesus' resurrection, they found it hard to accept.

The overwhelming sense of doubt that enveloped the disciples is something many of us

can relate to. When faced with such loss, it's easy to question everything we've believed. The disciples had devoted their lives to Jesus, believing him to be the Messiah, yet his crucifixion made them doubt their convictions. They wrestled with feelings of betrayal, confusion, and anger. For instance, Peter, who had boldly declared his loyalty to Jesus, found himself denying even knowing him in a moment of fear. Can you imagine the weight of that betrayal?

Picture this: you're in a situation where your loved one is taken away, and you're confronted with the choice of standing by their side or saving yourself. The fear of persecution can drive anyone to make choices they never thought they would. This internal conflict is what Peter and the other disciples faced, and it left them battling with guilt and shame. In the aftermath of such trauma, it's natural to reflect on our own lives and consider how we might react in similar situations.

Loss has a way of revealing our vulnerabilities and prompting us to examine our beliefs. It forces us to confront the fragility of life and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. In moments of deep grief, many people find themselves

questioning their faith. “Why did this happen?” “Where was God when I needed comfort?” These are common questions that arise when we face the harsh realities of life.

But here’s the thing: doubt is a part of faith. It’s okay to question, to feel lost, and to search for answers. The disciples’ journey is a testament to that. Even in their darkest moments, they eventually found their way back to faith, albeit with scars from their experiences. This journey of doubt and rediscovery is something that resonates with many of us. It’s a reminder that faith is not a straight path, but rather a winding road filled with twists, turns, and unexpected detours.

As we navigate our own experiences of loss, it’s essential to allow ourselves the space to grieve and to question. We may find solace in the stories of others who have walked similar paths, who have experienced loss and emerged with a renewed sense of purpose. These narratives can inspire us to reflect on our beliefs and to find meaning in our struggles.

In many ways, the story of the disciples is a reflection of the human experience. We all face

challenges that test our faith, be it through the loss of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or the loss of a job. Each of these experiences brings its own set of questions and emotions, forcing us to confront our beliefs and values.

There is something that we have to understand about traditional beliefs in Judaism about the Messiah. They expected him to come and be a powerful political leader, freeing the Jews from the clutches of the Romans. False Messiahs rose up all of the time, and the Jews dealt with them in the same way: crucifixion. Far from vanquishing the enemies of Israel, they put the Messiah claimants on display like criminals. They were not heroes nor did they rescue God’s people. So when the false Messiah was murdered by the Jews, it showed him to be a liar, a heretic, and under the curse of God. That is what the disciples were thinking when Jesus was crucified. He did not fulfil the prophecies. They thought that the power of God had been revealed to them. They thought that he had died and maybe the Jewish authorities were right. Their tradition revealed him to be a heretic and a liar. This man that they had dedicated themselves to was a liar. Everything that they believed

was a lie. In Jesus of Nazareth, they believed that the prophecies failed. The disciples were full of doubt in the very cause, and the very man, who they had committed their lives to.

It's also important to recognise that our faith can evolve over time. Just as the disciples' understanding of Jesus transformed after his resurrection, so too can our understanding of our beliefs change as we grow and learn. Embracing this evolution is crucial to cultivating a meaningful spiritual life. Ultimately, the journey through grief and doubt can lead us to deeper insights and a stronger connection to our faith. While loss may shake us to our core, it can also serve as a catalyst for growth. By allowing ourselves to feel the pain, to question, and to seek understanding, we open ourselves up to new possibilities and perspectives.

Jesus had explained his crucifixion to His apostles before it happened and that He would rise again from the dead, but they hadn't understood so it still came as a shock when it happened. Then while they were in hiding, wondering what they were going to do, He appeared to them and reminded them of the things He

had spoken of while He had been with them, and they recognized Him and remembered. And they were encouraged.

Jesus appeared to the women (Matthew 28:9–10), to the two believers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 25:13–32), to His disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36–53), to His disciples in Galilee, where He had instructed that they meet with him and where He gave them the great commission which has been passed down through the ages and is still being obeyed to this day: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16–20)

We all have moments when our beliefs are tested. I've certainly faced challenges that have shaken my faith, whether it's the loss of someone dear, health issues, difficulties at work, or struggles in relationships. In these times, it often feels like we are drowning in doubt, grief, stress, and worry. Just like the Disciples in the Bible, we question everything.

But here's a beautiful truth! When we turn to our Saviour and kneel in prayer, He works wonders in our lives. It's in those heartfelt moments that we realise why He is our Saviour. Our faith can be reborn, even when it seems utterly impossible. To explore this idea further, let's look at some examples from Victorian literature, a time filled with rich narratives that reflect on faith, doubt, and redemption.

Take Charles Dickens, for instance. His novel, *Great Expectations*, features the character Pip, who faces numerous trials throughout his life. Initially, Pip feels lost and uncertain about his identity and future. He navigates the complexities of love, loss, and ambition, which often lead him to question his faith in himself and others. Just like many of us, he experiences moments of doubt, especially when faced with the harsh realities of life. However, through the kindness of others and his own personal growth, Pip learns to embrace his true self and the importance of humility and gratitude.

In *Great Expectations*, we see Pip grappling with his expectations of life and the world around him. This mirrors our own experiences when we face loss or

hardship. We often have a certain vision of how our lives should unfold, and when reality doesn't match up, it can shake our faith. Just as Pip learns that wealth and status do not equate to happiness, we too can discover that our faith and purpose often emerge from the depths of struggle.

Another remarkable Victorian author, George Eliot, in her novel *Middlemarch*, presents the character Dorothea Brooke, who embodies the search for meaning in a complex world. Dorothea faces immense challenges in her quest for love and fulfilment, often finding herself at a crossroads between her ideals and the realities of her relationships. Her faith in people and her aspirations are tested repeatedly, leading her to moments of despair.

However, it is through these trials that Dorothea ultimately finds strength. Just like us, she learns that faith is not a straightforward path; it's a journey filled with obstacles and moments of doubt. When we experience loss or hardship, we can feel like Dorothea, questioning our faith and the purpose of our struggles. Yet, it is often in these moments of vulnerability that we can experience profound growth and rebirth.

Let's not forget about Thomas Hardy, whose works often reflect the tension between individual desires and societal expectations. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Tess faces a series of tragic events that lead her to question her faith in love, morality, and the world. Her journey is filled with heartache, and at times, it feels like all hope is lost. Yet, through her resilience and the love she holds for her family, Tess embodies the struggle between despair and faith.

Her story reminds us that even when life feels overwhelming, there is a possibility for redemption and renewal. Just as Tess navigates her challenges, we too can find strength in our struggles. When we kneel before our Saviour, just as Tess sought solace in her love for others, we can experience the miraculous rebirth of our faith.

So, what can we take away from these literary examples? First and foremost, it's essential to recognise that struggles are a part of the human experience. Just like Pip, Dorothea, and Tess, we all face moments of doubt and despair. These challenges can

feel overwhelming, but they also provide opportunities for growth and transformation.

When we kneel before our Saviour in prayer, we open ourselves up to receiving guidance and strength. It's during these moments of vulnerability that we can truly experience the wonders of faith. Just as the characters in Victorian literature navigate their journeys, we too can find meaning and purpose through our struggles.

In conclusion, remember that faith is not a destination but a journey filled with ups and downs. It's okay to question, to feel lost, and to seek answers. The stories of Victorian authors remind us that even in our darkest moments, there is hope for renewal and growth. So, let's embrace our struggles, lean into our faith, and trust that we can emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before!

And, if you find yourself grappling with loss, remember that you're not alone. It's okay to feel doubt and uncertainty. Embrace your journey, seek support from others, and allow yourself the grace to heal. In time, you may

discover a renewed sense of faith and purpose that resonates with your experiences.

As we also reflect on the experiences of the disciples, we may take comfort in the knowledge that even in our darkest moments, there is hope for renewal and growth. Just as they navigated their journey from despair to faith, so too can we find our way through the complexities of life, embracing both the joy and the pain that comes with being human as our faith is resurrected in Christ.



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# The Worthy Lamb

Mrs. Susan Mende

## Introduction

During my engineering days, I attended a youth camp where the speaker shared a powerful message on serving God. He began by emphasizing the worthiness of Jesus. From the very moment he started speaking, I felt God stirring my heart. As he continued, the conviction within me grew stronger. By the end of his message, the pastor extended an altar call, one for those committing to part-time ministry and another for those dedicating themselves to full-time ministry.

Filled with excitement and love for Jesus, I committed myself to full-time ministry. However, the pastor made one final call, asking those who had taken this step to

demonstrate their commitment by offering something valuable. As the offering bag was passed around, I found myself in deep inner turmoil. I had nothing to give except my expensive, gem-studded watch.

Fear gripped me. I knew that giving away such a precious possession would lead to scolding and possibly even punishment from my family. At that moment, I heard a still, small voice ask, "Do you love Me more than these?" With tears streaming down my face, I whispered, "Yes," and dropped my watch into the offering bag.

To my surprise, after the camp, my youth Pastor called those of us who had made commitments



aside, prayed for us, and returned our offerings. Just as I had the opportunity to surrender something valuable as an expression of love and devotion to Jesus, a woman in John 12:1-3 did so to express her deep love for Jesus.

- **The Worthy Lamb**

In John 12:1-3, we see that this is Jesus' last week, and every word and incident that took place during this time is incredibly important for us to examine. The apostle John intentionally arranges each word and event in a specific order to emphasize the main theme of his book: that Jesus is the Son of God, the worthy Lamb who is going to die for the sins of the world (John 1:29).

First, He gives us the time frame. By stating "six days before Passover," He begins a countdown to Jesus' final work on earth. Just as the last week before exams is crucial for a student or the final week before an interview is significant for a job seeker, this last week was critical for Jesus' mission on earth. And everything He did was exactly the way the scriptures prophesied about Him. Here, we see that

Jesus' final week on earth aligns perfectly with the season of the Passover festival, one of the most important and significant festivals for the Jews. From John 11, we observe that after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, He withdraws to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim. And this was the same time when Jews from various regions traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. But during this crucial time of the Passover festival, Jesus, along with His disciples, travels to Bethany 6 days before the Passover, instead of going to Jerusalem. Bethany, located just 3 km from Jerusalem, was the hometown of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, who were close friends of Jesus. This visit was not by chance but happened for a divine purpose.

So, when we see Jesus' crucifixion aligning with the Passover, the apostle John reveals a profound truth to his readers that Jesus is the perfect and final Passover Lamb who redeems His people from eternal death and gives them eternal life.

We observe from John 12:1 that Jesus is not only the perfect

Passover Lamb who will be crucified but also the victorious Lamb who has power over death. The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11:43-44 is mentioned again in John 12:1 because John emphasizes that the Passover Lamb, who will die on the cross, is also the one who holds resurrection power over death. As Jesus declared in John 11:25-26, "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" By highlighting these two significant aspects in a single verse, the apostle John is conveying that Jesus is not only the Lamb who would die but also the one who would conquer death.

Thus, John 12:1 sets the stage for Jesus' ultimate act of redemption, that is, His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. The worth of Jesus is revealed in the price He paid for us- the cross. To understand how worthy He is, look to the cross. See the price He paid for you and me, the agony He endured, and the sacrifice He made for our eternity. One thing that amazes

me is that He took on a human body for eternity. Why would God, who is Spirit in His glory, choose to take on a human body and look like us for all eternity? Because He loves us so much! He values us beyond measure.

- **Jesus should be honoured through Stewardship.**

In John 12:2, we see Lazarus, Mary, and Martha hosting a special meal for Jesus out of deep gratitude and love. This gathering was especially significant because Lazarus, recently raised from the dead, was a living testimony of Jesus' power over death. The dinner was hosted in Bethany, the village of Lazarus.

In biblical times, hosting a dinner was more than just providing food, it was an act of hospitality, fellowship, and deep honor. John 12:2 also states that Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with Jesus at the table. This highlights two meaningful ways to honor Jesus: through service and fellowship. Martha, known for her active role in hospitality, once again serves, expressing her deep love and reverence for Jesus. Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, sat at the table with Jesus,

showing his desire for close fellowship with Him. His very presence was a way of honoring Jesus and expressing his gratitude and devotion for the new life he had been given.

Even today, we can honor Jesus in many ways by using the gifts He has given us. We can glorify Him through our talents, whether in cooking, serving, writing, music, teaching, or leadership. Like Lazarus, we can honor God through our lives by being a testimony of His love, staying close to Him through His Word, prayer, fellowship, and boldly living out our faith. Like Simon, we can honor God by offering our resources, our homes, finances, or time to support His work, His servants, the Church, His mission, and ultimately His kingdom. Honoring Jesus is about using what we have to serve, worship, and give for His glory. The question is, how well will you use what God has given you to honor Him today?

In his book, *The Prophets Speak Today*, Dr. David Mende writes, "A two-thousand-rupee note looks so big when you put it in an offering bag, but so small when you use it in DMART. Serving the

Lord for an hour seems long, but how small 60 minutes are when spent on social media. We feel that a couple of hours spent at church is long, but how short they are while watching a movie or television. We get thrilled to watch a long game of cricket but complain when a sermon is longer than the regular time. We find it laborious to read a chapter in the Bible, but find it easy to read a newspaper or a novel. We can't think of anything to say when we pray, but don't have any difficulty thinking of what to talk about with a friend."

We should take a moment to examine our lives and reflect on whether we are being faithful stewards of what God has given us. Are we using our gifts, time, and resources to honor Jesus, or are we wasting them on things that have no eternal value?

- **Jesus should be honoured Above All.**

While Martha served and Lazarus enjoyed fellowship with Jesus, Mary chose to honor Him in a way that stood out through an extravagant act of devotion. From John 12:3, we see Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and

wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Mary poured out a jar of the most expensive perfume that is worth a year's wages onto Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Her act of worship and honor was not just generous; it was sacrificial. In John 12:5, Judas estimates the perfume's value to be equivalent to a whole year's wages. Mary didn't give out of her abundance, but she gave everything. She didn't just offer something she had; she gave up something precious. This perfume could have been her savings for marriage or future security.

In biblical times, such expensive perfumes were considered a form of financial security, much like savings or an inheritance today. For a woman in that society, giving away something so valuable meant taking a huge risk regarding her future security. Yet, she did not hesitate because her love for Jesus was far greater than her need for security.

Her act of worship was divine. In Jewish culture, bodies were anointed with perfumes and spices before burial. Mary may not have fully understood it at the

time, but her act foreshadowed Jesus' death and burial, making her one of the first to acknowledge His sacrifice. Mary's devotion went beyond just gratitude for her brother's miracle, it was an expression of deep love, surrender, and recognition of who Jesus truly was.

Mary's worship was humble. She sat at Jesus' feet, a position of reverence and submission. By wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair, Mary's worship was undignified, expressing complete humility and surrender. In Jewish culture, women were expected to cover their heads in public as a sign of modesty and honor. For Mary to uncover her hair and use it to wipe Jesus' feet was a deeply humbling and radical act. It was considered shameful for a woman to let down her hair in front of men, yet Mary willingly set aside cultural expectations to express her love and devotion to Jesus. This shows that her worship was not concerned with human opinions. She was completely focused on honoring Jesus, no matter the cost. When Mary honored Jesus, the whole house was filled with the fragrance of her expensive, precious perfume. True worship is

never hidden; it touches everyone around us.

Amy Carmichael was an Irish missionary who devoted her life to serving the people of India, especially young girls who were rescued from temple slavery. She left behind a comfortable life, choosing a path of sacrifice, suffering, and deep devotion to Jesus. Amy's love for Jesus was extravagant and sacrificial. Amy gave up her entire life, her comfort, family, and personal desires, to serve Jesus and rescue vulnerable children. She never returned home once she arrived in India, saying, "Nothing is more precious than Jesus." Amy's life poured out for Jesus continues to spread the fragrance of Christ's love in the world today.

### **Conclusion**

Matthew 26:13: "Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." Mary's gesture highlights the value Jesus places on sincere acts of love and worship, showing that even if such actions are misunderstood by others, they hold eternal significance in the Christian faith.

I would like to close this article with this one question: Are we truly honoring Jesus above all else, or are we letting other things take His place?



### **Mrs. Susan Mende**

*serves as a Christian counselor and is actively involved in women, youth, and children's ministries. She leads a youth group named 'Precious' that ministers to young girls. She has completed her Engineering in Computer Science and a Master's degree in Design, Marketing, and Communication in the UK. At present, she is pursuing an Advanced Christian counseling course through the Person to Person Institute for Christian Counselling.*

*She is married to Dr. David Mende, who serves as the Lead Pastor of El-Shaddai AG Church, Hyderabad. They are blessed with a daughter, Karis Ruth Mende. Mrs. Mende is passionate about seeing young people on fire for Christ.*

# The Rugged Cross, the empty grave

Ms. Roy Jennita Sundari

The rugged cross and the vision  
of light  
As I open my eyes, as I long to  
have sight  
A dread of death for the eternity  
on earth  
And humanity that is hopelessly  
lost  
And I walk with oils in my hand.

Rabboni, my saviour,  
Searching for you yonder with  
painful yearn  
Longing for salvation or maybe  
just an answer uncertain  
Perplexed and hazy, I feel  
confused and dumb.  
Recollecting the past few hours  
Did it all happen? or maybe an  
illusion or mirage?

My weak eyes of flesh led by my  
mortal feet  
Reaching the place I so fear to  
tread  
The dark caves before me  
More mysterious than ever  
Mind that is racing to gather  
sense but never.

What is this that I see?  
Maybe a dream nor reality.

A rolled away stone and voices  
that warn  
Where do I find you, Lord?

Where in the living... have they  
taken you where?  
Why am I ... 'Seeking the living in  
the dead'.

Gathering voices as my throats  
remain shut.  
I haste and ran thinking along  
every picking wind  
Was this something you knew  
before?  
Did you tell us what we could  
never adore?  
Going beyond my power to call,  
Or bother my brothers in faith.

Jesus Christ, my stream of light in  
infinite darkness  
A true friend amongst fake  
stealing hands  
A loving counsellor amidst  
accusing false lips  
What was that darkest hour and  
the horrifying minute  
Of night over day and darkness  
over light

Reviled, yet you returned it not  
Suffered, yet you threatened them  
not  
Now unreachable, were always  
there for my tears.

Gone are you to your home above  
Only if I could see you for the very  
last time once

To bid you my farewell with my  
meagre tears.

Perplexion again, as I am  
confused again  
No answer but blank minds and  
blank caves

Where do I go from here?  
With sorrow and tears on empty  
grounds, I stand  
Sobbing incessantly and comes  
around a solemn voice  
Calling out my name  
Probably a gardener! I  
misconceive  
Oh! The folly brain of mine.

Visions are restored, and clarity  
reaches my soul  
Nonetheless, my Rabbi.  
So Holy, so pure; my saviour, my  
Lord  
Here you are, restoring my breath  
And releasing my sorrow,  
My heart still races with queries  
pouring down my eyes  
Where were you and how do you  
...?  
Why did you and ... what ... and  
where ... and how?

Now, nothing more but ...  
Celebration and cries of elation  
I dare to near yet forbidden to  
touch

Oh! Let my brothers know  
Who all eleven and more are  
waiting  
Dreading every hour to pass  
Waiting for the worst and staring  
at their door.

I have seen Him ...

Our Lord, I have heard Him ...  
My Rabbi is alive,  
Our master is saved,  
To save me and you.  
From the rugged cross and an  
empty cave

Commotion in the air,  
Not the least to spare  
Unequal stares at me, figuring  
sanity is at sparce

'Mary, are you awake?  
'Did your weary eyes dream  
Did you retire by the cave door?'

Voices too slim falling before me  
Senses too blind, clouded by the  
magnificence I adored,  
Sleepless was I, do I care?  
Crying and longing, do I know  
But the light of salvation  
Could this ever deflate?

Is the wait over?  
And justice restored  
Did the Rabboni finish, indeed?  
Proclamation that he did ...  
At the rugged cross

Awaited too far from before  
My Lord is here, Rabboni is here  
now  
I shout and run with joy unbound  
What now, what later?  
I know not ... my mind and heart  
decipher it not,

He is resurrected; he is back.  
My Life and saviour  
My Lord and teacher  
All that I know is a rugged cross is  
now an empty grave.

Ms. Roy Jennita Sundari

## **Ashish Foundation for the Differently Abled Charitable Trust**

### **Job Posting**

Ashish Foundation for the Differently Abled Charitable Trust is seeking candidates for the position of an **Executive Director** in New Delhi

#### **Job profile: Executive Director**

The Executive Director, under the supervision of the Board of Trustees, has the final responsibility over all aspects related to the organisation. The Executive Director will have a strong presence in the community in order to increase awareness of Ashish Foundation for the purposes or advocacy, fundraising, and training others in the worldview approach to serving people who are differently-abled.

#### **Qualifications**

A graduate in special education/ Post graduate in any field.

#### **Experience**

- Minimum 5 years in the Development field at a leadership position
- Experience in Special Education /Public health/Disability field is desirable

#### **Skills**

- Educational and training/teaching experience
- Strong communication to write, speak and interact with others along with use of computer and electronic media.
- Leadership skills in coordinating, managing and engaging with others within the organisation, with parents, and with outside agencies and networking
- Strong administrative skills and financial management.
- Creativity, research skills and analytical thinking.

#### **About the organization**

Ashish Foundation for the Differently Abled (AFDA) Charitable Trust, is a non-profit organization located in Dwarka, West Delhi established in 2007 to serve children and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities and their families.

#### **TO APPLY**

- Please share your updated CV accompanied with a cover letter justifying suitability for the position to [recruitments@ashishfoundation.co.in](mailto:recruitments@ashishfoundation.co.in)
- CVs without cover letter would not be considered



Ashish Foundation for the Differently Abled Charitable Trust, A178, Sector 19, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075.  
[www.ashishindia.org](http://www.ashishindia.org)





**2025 ADMISSIONS OPEN**



# M.A CHRISTIAN STUDIES M.A RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Anchor Complex, Burma Camp, East Block, Post Box-108, Dimapur-797112, Nagaland



**Seeking a Lead Pastor for South Delhi Congregation of  
Delhi Bible Fellowship  
(SDC DBF New Delhi)**

Delhi Bible Fellowship (DBF) is a non-denominational, evangelical church, started in 1968, currently having 34 weekly services across the Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region).

DBF is looking to appoint a Lead Pastor, whom God has called, to serve the South Delhi Congregation of English church in South Delhi.

The SDC DBF Church is a unique, vibrant, and growing church that focuses on children, youth, and families, drawing people from all walks of life. There is one worship service every Sunday and several ministries serving about 200+ members from different states. The church is led by a collective team of Elders, Deaconesses, and Deacons who volunteer their time and resources to build the community.

The applicant should be committed to and gifted in the teaching and preaching of God's Word and Pastoral care and counselling. The person should have a good reputation in line with the qualifications of church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:2-4 and Titus 1:6-9. The applicant should have strong skills in leadership, discipleship, evangelism, and teaching, be a team player, and be able to work with the other pastors and staff of the organization, with a vision to lead the church into the future. He should be fluent in English and Hindi and should have a heart for ministry among those who live in the metro city and slums.

The applicant must be an Indian citizen, with an M. Div or BD and have at least 8 years of relevant pastoral experience.

Interested and suitable candidates are requested to send their detailed resume on or before 30th of April 2025 to the email ID or postal address given below.

Email ID for correspondence: [searchcommittee.dbf@gmail.com](mailto:searchcommittee.dbf@gmail.com)

**Postal Address:**

Convenor  
Search Committee  
Delhi Bible Fellowship  
22, Bhai Veer Singh Marg  
New Delhi – 110 001  
Phone: 011-23360944

Intercessory  
*Prayer*  
Points



April 2025

**1 TUESDAY** Thank God for the new month and for His enduring love for you and all mankind.

**2 WEDNESDAY** Pray for different parts of the world that are disturbed by violence. Pray specially for the church of God to be resilient and firm in their stand. Pray that they may be a source of encouragement and help to the suffering people.

**3 THURSDAY** Pray for the Christians of Arunachal Pradesh. Thank God for boldness to stand up for their faith. Pray for God's intervention and protection as they live out their faith.

**4 FRIDAY** Pray for school children as they start a new session. Thank God for the growth you see in your child(ren). Pray that they may have more opportunities to learn new things.

**5 SATURDAY** Pray that you and your family would draw near to

God and gain strength from Him.

**6 SUNDAY** Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would penetrate deeply and spread widely as believers witness Christ to the world.

**7 MONDAY** Pray for the ministry of EFI. Pray that the Lord would mightily use EFI to support and strengthen the churches and individuals.

**8 TUESDAY** Pray for D6 Family Conference organized by Asia Evangelical Alliance to be held from 16-17 May via Zoom. Pray that many in India would respond and sign up for this conference.

**9 WEDNESDAY** Continue to pray for Manipur. Pray for permanent solution and peace for the state. Pray for God's people to have clarity, strength, boldness and courage to choose what is right and reject what is wrong.

**10 THURSDAY** Pray for the churches in India. Pray for continued strength. Pray also for unity within the church and that God's Word would be taught and obeyed with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**11 FRIDAY** Pray for our nation that we may be submissive to God and be a blessing to the nations around us. Pray for the leaders of our country that they would uphold integrity and honesty as they serve the people.

**12 SATURDAY** Pray for yourself as you retrospect and spend time with God during this holy week.

**13 SUNDAY** Palm Sunday. Praise Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Pray that you honor Him as your King just as you had accepted Him as your Saviour.

**14 MONDAY** Pray for all E F I m e m b e r s ( C h u r c h e s , organizations, and individuals) that they may demonstrate integrity and transparency in all their dealings. Pray also that they may act as role models for others to follow.

**15 TUESDAY** Pray for your pastor that he would be renewed

and transformed as he meditates on the living Word of God. Pray also that the name of Jesus would be lifted high and be praised through him.

**16 WEDNESDAY** Pray for the persecuted believers that they would find comfort and strength in Christ, the head of the Church. Pray that their sufferings will not be in vain.

**17 THURSDAY** Pray for repentance of sins and recommitment to God who made a way for our salvation by sending His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

**18 FRIDAY.** Good Friday. Pray that Christ's atoning sacrifice and death would touch many lives as we commemorate Good Friday today.

**19 SATURDAY** Holy Saturday. Pray for deeper faith, love and commitment as we wait for the consummation of our faith and see Christ face to face. Pray for perseverance as you serve Him with all your heart.

**20 SUNDAY** Easter Sunday. Christ is risen! Praise God for Jesus who gave His life for us. We have eternal life through Christ

alone. Pray that Christ's death and resurrection may bring new encouragement, strength, and motivation to live a godly Christian life.

**21 MONDAY** Pray courage to share the Gospel boldly. Pray for freedom to choose, practice, and share our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**22 TUESDAY** Pray for the people who are struggling with drug abuse. Pray that they would turn to God who is mighty in power and experience relief and release.

**23 WEDNESDAY** Pray that we would have the wisdom to care for the earth. Pray that we would steward and care for the good of future generations and all God's creatures.

**24 THURSDAY** Pray that child labour would be eradicated, and every child would enjoy their childhood. Pray for God's protection over them. Pray also for EFL Children @ Risk to be used in ways that would change the lives of many children.

**25 FRIDAY** Let us pray today for those in the remote places that

they would be provided with basic medical facilities. Pray for the state leaders to be mindful of their plights and work towards this goal actively.

**26 SATURDAY** Pray that you may raise your standard of giving as a recipient of God's grace and providence.

**27 SUNDAY** Pray that every believer would be able to worship without fear and disturbance. Pray also for people of other faiths to respect and regard people who think and act differently from them.

**28 MONDAY** Pray for the people at your workplace. Pray that you would show Christ's love to them and be a good influence on them. Pray that there would be safe environment and health care at all workplaces.

**29 TUESDAY** Continue to pray for children in your neighbourhood. Pray for their enthusiasm, God's provision, and protection on them throughout the year.

**30 WEDNESDAY** Thank God for leading you this far. Thank Him for all the things He has done for you.

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“I am  
the resurrection  
and the life.”

John 11:25

Evangelical  
Fellowship of India



HAPPY  
Easter

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