

## Home Group study: week beginning 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021

### Darkness Before the Dawn

#### The Freedom

Can you think of any historic events in your lifetime that have involved a great public celebration, lots of razzmatazz and/or great pomp and ceremony? How might you expect the greatest event in history to be revealed to the public?

#### Read: John 20: 1-18

How many people are involved in the resurrection story? Who actually encounters the Risen Jesus? Does this in any way seem like the greatest event in history? Consider why God might have chosen such a low-key way of announcing such a momentous and victorious event. How do you think the second coming of Jesus might differ in this respect?

#### Discovery

How significant is it that Jesus appears only to a lone woman? What does this whole event tell us about the devotion (a) of Mary, (b) of Peter and (c) of 'the other disciple' (who we can understand to be John, the writer)?

#### Understanding

We're not told exactly what John believed in v8. It would seem to be that he believed Jesus had risen from the dead: but do you think v9 and v10 cast doubt on that?

Nor are we told what Peter believed. But have a look at Acts 2: 24-28. Here Peter is speaking to the Jewish people after the resurrection and openly accuses them in v23 of putting Jesus to death. He quotes Psalm 16; which bit of that quotation do you think suggests Peter now knows that the scripture has been fulfilled?

Why do you think Mary failed to recognise Jesus at first? *(There may be more than one reason. Do we expect we will look exactly the same in our resurrection bodies? Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection: what might his changed appearance say about what we have to look forward to?)*

## **Application**

What happens to enable Mary to recognise Jesus? Can you think of any scriptures in the Gospels which explain why she now recognises him?

Considering the whole context of this scripture, what does the way Jesus speaks to Mary suggest about the way Jesus responds to each of us?

How does Mary react to the revelation that this is the Risen Jesus speaking to her?

How should we react when we encounter the Risen Lord Jesus?

Consider what Mary is like at the beginning of this passage and what she is like at the end: how is Mary's life immediately transformed by her encounter with Jesus? Can you point out the contrasts between Mary in the two halves of this story? What is the central point around which her whole life pivots?

What does that tell us about the hope that we can experience now when we are in despair?

Pray for new encounters with the Risen Lord Jesus, that we can experience similar transformations in our own lives.