

Mary stood.

There are so many images of Mary Magdalene, most based on untruths, many portraying her as weak or weeping, the penitent. But there is one image of her that clarifies her place of authority.

She stood.

From the Gospel of Mary:

The Blessed One is in their midst and has greeted them all, saying: Peace be with you. Receive my peace unto yourselves. He goes on to say: "Beware that no one lead you astray saying Lo here or lo there! For the Son of Man is within you." He ends his message telling them to: Go then and preach the gospel of the Kingdom. Then he departs.

The Gospel of Mary continues by saying: But they were grieved. They wept greatly, saying, "How shall we go to the Gentiles and preach the gospel of the Kingdom of the Son of Man? If they did not spare Him, how will they spare us?"

Then Mary stood up, greeted them all, and said to her brethren, Do not weep and do not grieve nor be irresolute, for His grace will be entirely with you and will protect you. But rather, let us praise His greatness, for He has prepared us and made us to be fully human. When Mary said this, she turned their hearts to the Good, and they began to discuss the words of the Savior.

Mary's actions and words interrupted their fear, which was great and halted their flawed reasoning, filled with self-pity and doubt. She stood up.

Imagine the customs she violated with that single action. But then, this wasn't the first time we see Mary standing when others might have cowered or as with the disciples, fled.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." John 19:25.

Mary stood at the foot of the cross. For hours, she had witnessed the ultimate cruelty of men, seen the most outrageous acts of injustice. She heard the mocking of the soldiers. She stood within the darkness that fell over the land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour of that day. When Jesus gave up his spirit, she felt the earth begin to tremble and then shake so violently that tombs were opened up. She stood with Jesus until his last moments of life and followed the men who carried his body to the unused tomb.

Even her title, Mary of Magdala, may not have meant the city from where she hailed. In Hebrew, the word *Magdala* means "tower." A tower doesn't sit or fall; a tower stands for all to see.

In John, we read again of her standing. Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. The disciples had already returned to their hiding places; the stone had been rolled away, the tomb was empty. She didn't collapse in sorrow or flee, as the disciples had. She stood. She bent down to look into the tomb and the two angels questioned why she weeps.

She sees a man she mistakes to be the gardener, who asks why she is crying? Who is it she is looking for?

It is ironic to me that at this very moment when all the others have abandoned her, when the disciples clearly have no concern for the missing body of their Master, it is Mary who searches. Mary stands ready to reclaim the body of her Lord, single-handedly if need be.

So, we shouldn't be surprised that in the Gospel of Mary, it is Mary once again who stands and reclaims all that Jesus had taught.

Once she stood, some translations of the Gospel of Mary say she embraced her brothers and sisters, but for the most part, those assembled were men. For a woman to stand among men in this time in history and rebuke them, in gentlest of ways, took courage.

Yet, it was more than courage that we witness in the scene. It is her authority.

She reminds them that they have been prepared. She doesn't cajole or mince words. Instead, she is clear when she says they are ready. His grace will protect them, she announces.

What astounding words at this bleakest of times. Her absolute understanding of the Teacher's messages, her realization that no matter how unbearable was her own personal grief or theirs, she and all the disciples had been charged with a mission. A mission that was greater than their personal comfort. A mission that had to be taken, a mission that would indeed require their life.

"Let us praise his greatness," she says. Let us remember why he chose us. Let us not be afraid. Only Mary, 'who understood all,' as one sacred text states, could have challenged them in such a bold way and, more importantly, be heard.

At first, Peter asks her to share what she knows about the Teacher that they, the disciples, don't know. Then, when hearing her story, one so profoundly different but filled with new knowledge, he immediately contends that the Teacher would never have preferred a woman over them.

He almost gets away with discrediting her. After all, Mary didn't defend herself, only incredulously asking him, "Do you think I made this up?"

But Levi scoffs and challenges him with, 'if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well.' He reminds them that Jesus had commanded them to separate and preach the gospel. Ultimately, they began to go forth to proclaim and to preach.

Mary stood for what mattered in life.

We can do no less.

Dorothy Gibbons
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