



In The Garden



"I come to the garden alone,
while the dew is still on the roses;
and the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
the Son of God discloses.

"He speaks, and the sound of His voice
is so sweet the birds hush their singing;
and the melody that He gave to me
within my heart is ringing.

"I'd stay in the garden with Him,
tho the night around me be falling;
but He bids me go - thru the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling.

"And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
and He tells me I am His own;
and the joy we share as we tarry there,
none other has ever known."

"Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them all that He had said to her." - John 20:18

In 1912, music publisher Dr. Adam Geibel asked Austin Miles to write a hymn text that would be "sympathetic in tone, breathing tenderness in every line; one that would bring hope to the hopeless, rest for the weary, and downy pillows to dying beds." Mr. Miles was inspired as he meditated on John 20, his favorite chapter of the Bible, where Mary meets the risen Lord Jesus. He felt as if he were part of that scene and pictured himself at the entrance of a garden. In his mind's eye, he saw a woman sobbing as she walked into the shadows toward the tomb, where she found the stone rolled away.

John appeared, looking at the tomb; then Peter entered, followed slowly by John. When they left, Mary came back to the tomb weeping. It was there, in the garden, that she heard the voice of her blessed Savior, Jesus, calling her name. Mary fell at His feet in worship, with arms outstretched, and looked into His face as she cried, "Rabboni!"

"In the Garden" was one of my mother's favorite hymns. As I think back to my childhood, we did not talk about Jesus or the Bible in our home, but my Mom would sing hymns in the car as she drove me to and from my church activities. My parents were both active at Grove Reformed Church, giving of their time and talents in service to the Lord and His people. I

credit the children's ministries there for the excellent training I had in my younger years in the Bible and the doctrines of the faith. That has served me well, and I say that to encourage all of you who invest in the lives of future generations. The seeds you sow today can reap a rich harvest in years to come. My mother passed away suddenly when I was only 13, but that legacy of faith settled deep into my heart as I saw the way she lived.

Scripture tells us that Mary Magdalene was a woman with a demonic past, whom Jesus had healed, but the Bible does not say that she was a prostitute. There are many misconceptions about this Mary, but the fact is that her hopeless life was transformed by Jesus of Nazareth, whom she loved, and she was the first person to meet the resurrected Christ, "in the garden."

John 20 records the appearances of Jesus to His own followers: first to Mary Magdalene, then to the 10 disciples, and finally to Thomas. Jesus did not appear to unbelievers because the evidence of His resurrection would not have convinced them, just as His miracles had not. As Jesus explained in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

It was on the first day of the week that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark and saw that the stone had already been taken away from the entrance. The "first day" was a reference to Sunday, which is why believers from that time on began to meet on "the Lord's day." Years later, while in exile on Patmos for preaching the gospel, John received power by the Holy Spirit "on the Lord's day" to perceive the prophecy in a vision that revealed Christ in his exaltation (Revelation 1).

Mary had known great sorrow in her life until she was cleansed and made new by the Son of God. From that point on she became one of Jesus' faithful followers, and she was drawn back to the tomb on that Resurrection morning. One church father referred to her as "the apostle to the apostles."

An apostle is a "sent one," and God sent Mary to the disciples to tell them of the resurrection. She was honored to share the good news of the One who had given her new life, and had now risen from the grave. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul talks about this new life, saying, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things have become new." Let us rejoice in the new life we find in Jesus, and be like Mary who shared the message of the risen Christ with others.