

## Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

## You Will Be Found

## Old Testament Lesson

John 20:11-18 (NRSVUE)

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her.

## Bible/Sermon Focus

What makes you an "outsider" and what makes you an "insider?" That is the main question proposed this week in our Sermon Series, *Changed for Good: Stories of Transformation on the Broadway Stage*. "Dear Evan Hansen" was one of those shows that seemed to spread like wildfire in popularity when it hit Broadway. Peter Marks of the Washington Post described Evan Hansen as a boy "who invents an important role for himself in a tragedy that he did not earn." Evan finds himself in the middle of someone else's story and doesn't deny it and even enjoys being there, in the middle of it all.

Pastor Andy took some time this week to contrast Evan Hansen with the figure of Mary Magdalene, the disciple who was considered by most of the early church to be the main confidant of Jesus himself. In many extra-canonical books, Mary is the central figure that Jesus speaks to, not only in the Gospel attributed to her but also in the Gospel of Phillip, the Gospel of Thomas (one of the earliest texts of the church), The Gospel of Bartholomew, The Gospel of Peter, The Gospel of Marcion, and the Pistis Sophia, to name a few. She is also mentioned in all four Gospel found in our canon (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

There is good reason that most of the books on that list were kept out of the final edited version of the Bible we use today. In the early church there were different ideas about who Jesus was. Some gospels claimed that Jesus was never fully human, that the material world isn't real, and that in knowing Christ we could gain an enlightened state that freed us from the throes of a harsh, material existence. This group of early Christians was known as the Gnostics.

But the tragic collateral damage of the creation of doctrine, a process that took many Christianities (plural) and solidified the Christianity we still see today, was the removal of women from leadership roles in the church.

Male church leaders centered the stories of other, earlier male leaders in ways that most likely were not reflective of the actual early church. They decentered the stories of female leadership and made accusations about Magdalene for generations. And it still happens today.

One of the most compelling aspects of Christianity is the scandalous nature of the Gospel which makes room for all people. Jesus made room for all people. Women were a part of his leadership group, and continued to be leaders for the first few centuries of our beloved church. They too were *found* by God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. And yet male leaders in the church are lifted up more often and have more power and authority laid on them still today.

Sometimes what makes you an "outsider" or an "insider" is defined by the world around you and there's very little you can do about it. Sometimes what makes you an "outsider" or an "insider" is a feeling that you get inside of you, coming only from God. A *knowledge* that you are *equal*, *valued*, and *found*, in spite of what the world says.

## Discussion Questions

1. When do you feel like an "insider" or an "outsider"?
2. What have you been taught about Mary Magdalene?
3. Our tradition has changed over time. How do you think God plays a role in that?
4. How is the Gospel scandalous?
5. What women most impacted your faith?

## Prayer

God of grace, you cover all of creation with your loving presence. In your eyes, there is no such thing as "insider" and "outsider." Forgive us for the times we conform to the world's definitions of "in" and "out," and help us to embrace all people as you do. Help us speak truth as we name the ways our story has changed over time, and inspire us to continue telling the story in new ways, so new generations will experience the joy of being *found*. Amen.

*"Out of the shadows, the morning is breaking  
And all is new, all is new  
It's filling up the empty, and suddenly I see that  
All is new, all is new."*