

Jesus says “Hi”

Matthew 28:1-9

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Message

[Peter comes out dressed as a bride]



I was there...

“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.”

—Matt. 28:1

I’m the “other Mary.”

You might think that I’m trying to make a statement about non-gender specific restrooms and such . . . but I’m not.

I’m the “other Mary.”

On Christmas Eve I usually preach in character, and sometimes I have on Easter as well—but this is who I really am: “The Other Mary.”

The Gospels mention several Marys that might all have been at the tomb.

- Mary the mother of James, Mary the wife of Clopas,
- Mary of Bethany that anointed Jesus with perfumed oil,
- Mary Magdalene, who had seven demons and according to tradition had been a prostitute. (And she may have anointed Jesus’ feet with oil.)
- And Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Matthew could’ve specified, but he wrote, “the other Mary,” and I think he did that for a reason—he’s making a point: the Church is “The Other Mary.”

He’s already recorded Jesus as saying,

“The one who does the will of my Father in Heaven is my mother,”

As if, whenever you love, your giving birth to Jesus—like Mother Mary.

And some argue that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' bride.
Of course she wasn't, but of course she is.
Jesus is married to all the Marys . . .
And all the people of God—the Bride of Christ.

That's the grand narrative of Scripture—that God betroths Himself to His people, but His people "*whore, play the whore, and go whoring in whoredom.*" Now I'm not being crass, I'm directly quoting ninety-one Old Testament Bible verses that the people of God just seem to ignore.

A harlot, or one who plays the harlot, buys and sells Love as if Love were a commodity that we could control.

But a *bride* no longer bargains for Love, but surrenders to Love, in a covenant of Love.
For harlots, love is conditional.
For a bride, love is unconditional and actually determines all conditions.

Well . . . we are all Mary the Harlot, destined to be Mary the Bride, and then, giving birth to Jesus in this world, Mary the mother of Jesus.

We're all Mary, and we're all Eve.

John is sure to point out that all of this happens in a garden, and Scripture tells us that Jesus was crucified on a tree.

God is Love, and God alone is Good, so when Eve took the knowledge of the Good, she took the life of Love, as if God were a piece of fruit hanging on a tree. We all took the life of Love hanging on a cross in a Garden called Calvary.

Well, Jesus is the Ultimate Adam, says Scripture and that makes us His harlot bride Eve.
Chewing on that can make your head spin, and then it can fill all sorts of blanks.
But for right now, I hope this picture—of me—is burned into you brain:



I'm the other Mary... and so are you!
[Peter pulls out apples from his bra and takes a bite of one.]

I'm Eve, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Jesus. I'm the strange woman that anoints the feet of Jesus and His head with perfumed oil. I'm the other Mary and so are you, but I feel uncomfortable in a dress. So if you don't mind, I'm going to take it off and keep preaching . . .

[Peter begins to take off the wedding dress that he arrived in. He then puts it on a hanger and hangs it on the cross.]

...the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

—Matthew 28:3b-4

Now this seems to be a real problem for God:

He appears to the people that He loves and they seem to drop like flies, like... catch on fire and die.

When Moses spoke to God on the mountain, the people of Israel were so terrified at the Word of God, which came from the fire that they said to Moses, *“Who has heard the voice of God coming out of fire and lived? (Deut. 5)”* And then they begged Moses not to let God speak to them directly anymore. Then God says to Moses, “Yeah, that’s probably a good idea. I could kill them...” But God gives Moses instructions to build a box called an Ark or coffin—dead word. It would contain the Law—which is the Word of God, written in stone. God told them to cover it with an “Atonement seat,” or “Mercy Seat,” sprinkled with blood—the life is in the blood.

God’s presence would manifest on the Mercy seat and speak to Moses.

God would travel with His people, go to war with His people, and save His people from the throne on top of the Ark of the Covenant. It was absolutely wonderful . . . and entirely unsafe.

500 years later, King David was bringing the Ark into Jerusalem, on a cart. When the cart hit a bump and a fellow named Uzzah tried to steady the Ark. He tried to save salvation and got “... by God... on the spot.

Well, the Ark was obviously too dangerous to keep in a tent made of cloth, so King David endeavored to construct a container of stone, called a temple. In 2 Samuel 7, God says to David, “But David, I want to move with my people—go camping with my people. That’s why I asked for a tent and didn’t ask for a house...never-the-less your seed will build me a house.”

Everyone assumed that that son of David was Solomon.

Solomon built a temple of stone . . .

Once a year on the Day of Atonement the high priest would go behind the veil, in the temple made of stone to sprinkle blood on the Mercy seat on top of the Ark. They tied bells to his robe and a rope on to his ankles so they could drag his body out of the sanctuary if he got “smoted” like Uzzah—like, a living sacrifice or something.

Well . . . God seems kind of intolerant, don’t you think?

God seems to have anger issues, wouldn’t you say?

God seems kind of divided:

“Should I save my people, or smite my people?” That appears to be a problem.

He’s like a bonfire in love with a snowflake.

Or, a bug zapper in love with a gnat.

Worship in the temple, must’ve looked something like this:

A short clip from *A Bug’s Life* is shown

[The scene takes place right next to a bug zapper.]

Bug 1: "No. Harry, no! Don't look at the light!"

Bug 2: "I can't help it; it's so beautiful!" [Zapping sounds and cries of terror are heard as Harry the bug is zapped!]

And it's not like God is the bad guy and Jesus is the good guy.
Jesus is the Word of God that gets spoken from the fire.
Jesus is the Light. He is the zap in the zapper.

At one point, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain. On top of the mountain, it's like He turned off stealth mode. And His face began to shine brighter than the sun. Saint Paul writes, "*We have seen the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.*" Well Peter sees, and Peter freaks out. He yells, "Shall I build a tabernacle?" That means a tent or a temple.

A burning cloud appears, the disciples fall to the ground, as if "smoted," and a voice booms:
"Shut up Peter and listen. "

But we understand what Peter is doing, right? He's thinking: "This is out of control. We got to get Jesus in a box... before someone gets hurt."

It's no wonder that the leaders of Israel freaked out when Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple.

- They had God under control.
- They kept God in a box. And sold Him to the people at the temple for a profit.
- They were playing the whore and pimping God.

I bet they secretly hoped that God was dead.

- It's easiest to buy and sell a dead God that we only pretend is alive.
- But if God was not dead, and the temple was destroyed, such that God got out of the box... that could be an epic disaster.

All the prophets spoke of the Day of the Lord, when He would judge His People...
And judge them for playing the whore.

They said that on that day God's anger would be revealed (Zephaniah 2:2)

The word for *anger* is also translated *face*.

God had said to Moses, "No man can see my face and live."

Well, it was prophesied that on "that day" the sun would go dark at noon (Amos 8:9), the earth would shake (Zech. 14:5), and the moon would be confounded (it would blush) (Is 24:23). Scripture claims that as Jesus hung on the cross the sun went dark at noon, the earth shook, and according to astronomers, the moon rose blood red in full eclipse over Judea that night, April 3 33AD. (Peter refers to this: Acts 2:20)

Well everyone saw the signs, but most foreboding of all—the veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom and it appeared as if God got out. Tombs broke open, people got out. And the Priests were terrified that Jesus' tomb might break open as well, and He might get out.

And, so of course, the guards dropped like flies, when the earth shook and the

angel descended . . . just the angel, let alone the Lord.

On Easter we all dress up smile and say, “He’s alive... He’s alive... Hallelujah...”
But the worst thing you can hear in a horror film is something pretty similar:

“It’s alive!”

“It’s alive and it wants you.”

“It’s alive; it wants you, and it could be anywhere and everywhere.”

And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hi”

—Matthew 28:4-9a

Chairete in Greek, translated “Greetings!” “Hail”, or “Rejoice” in most English Bibles. Technically it means, “Y’all rejoice.” But in Jesus’ day it was the common greeting, and so should be translated “Hey, Howdy, or Hi”

And so, this is the first word from beyond the grave, in the new Eon: Jesus says, “Hi.”

Of all the things he could’ve said, why “Hi”?

You would expect something like:

“Behold I have risen! Sound the trumpet. Gather the troops. We march on Rome.”

Or “Whoa check it out: I’m God and you’re not. So, see you later dirt bags.”

Or maybe, “I am consubstantial, co-eternal, and co-equal with the Father and the Spirit, being three persons existing in a hypostatic union that you really ought to call the Trinity.”

He could’ve said that, but instead He says, “Hi.” Why does He say “Hi”?

- That’s just so entirely normal.
- It’s something you might say to someone with whom your entirely familiar.
- It’s entirely casual—no anxiety, no pomposity, not theatrics, just “Hi”
- It may contain nor more meaning than “Hey look we’re together.”

Do you suppose that’s what the Creator was shooting for all along?

That we might just be at home together, or perhaps, take a walk in the garden, in the cool of the day—together? Jesus says, “Hi! ...It’s me. Same guy from last Friday . . . It’s just that now you know: I m also the resurrection and the life and God.”

So my first question: Why did Jesus say “Hi”?

And a second question: Why didn’t these women drop dead or burst into flames?

It appears that God’s problem is solved.

The theological word for that is *atonement*.

Theologians have argued for two thousand years about the nature of the atonement, but the popular idea in most churches today is that Jesus’ death on the cross changed something in

God. It's the idea that God the Father couldn't tolerate sinners, but God the Son loved sinners and, because he died for sinners, it changed the heart of God the Father.

The only problem is that God is not divided—"God is One."
And God does not change—"He's the same yesterday today and forever."

You know? People still drop dead, and burst into flames, in the presence of—not only God the Father but Jesus the Son—*after* He dies for the sins of the world. When He appears to John, in the Revelation, John drops to the ground as if dead. When He appears to Paul on the road to Damascus it just about kills Paul. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Paul writes that one-day Jesus will be revealed in flaming fire, and those who don't know God and obey the Good News will be destroyed simply by His presence.

- Of course, Paul argues that he had already been destroyed by Christ's presence on the road to Damascus—destroyed and made new—"no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me," writes Paul.
- God saved Paul, by smiting Paul, and making him new.
- In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul writes that the antichrist will be destroyed by the epiphany of Christ's coming.
- It's like Christ is already here, and all He has to do, is go out of stealth mode and all who don't trust that He is Good News—just "poof!" go up in flames.

So God doesn't change . . . from intolerant to tolerant because of the death of Jesus.
And maybe we should ask, "Is God, or was God, actually ever intolerant in the first place?"

The Prophet Habakkuk says that God can't look on sin (1:13), but then complains that God idly looks on sinners. He can't look on sin, and yet, God sees all things (Heb. 4:13, Mark 4:22), which clearly implies that sin is not a thing, but the absence of things, like Goodness, Truth and Love. So, God is intolerant of no things—that is nothing, which we refer to as something called evil, sin, chaos and the void—the *absence* of Love, Truth, and Goodness.

In Exodus 33 and 34, when God says to Moses, "*No man can see my face and live,*" God does agree to let Moses see His backside, His behind as His "Goodness" passes before Moses, and God proclaims His name.

So He hides Moses in the cleft of the Rock and passes by him saying, "*I am that I am. And I will be gracious on whom I will be gracious and merciful on whom I will be merciful... forgiving sin... but I won't simply clear the guilty.*" I think He's saying, "I will be tolerant on whom I choose to be tolerant, and if you are intolerant of my tolerance, I won't tolerate your intolerance. I will destroy it and turn it into tolerance."

Tolerance isn't a word that you can easily find in most English Bibles, but you know that they must've had a word to describe such a thing, and I think it's clear that they did. The word is the Greek noun *aphesis* or the Greek verb *aphiemi*, which is translated "let," "allow," "suffer" or "forgive."

You know I hope that unforgiveness is the unforgivable sin. Jesus said, "If you don't forgive, you won't be forgiven." In other words God won't tolerate your intolerance, indefinitely. It's like He's so tolerant His tolerance will burn your intolerance until you're tolerant.

Think about it: Who could possibly be more tolerant than the Creator and His Word—with which He upholds all things? Think of someone you can't tolerate: it could be Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Bashar al-Assad, Hitler or your mother-in-law. Think of that person: God continually tolerates that person or they wouldn't exist. And isn't that your chief complaint against God? He tolerates guys like Bashar al-Asad and... your mother-in-law?

Think of a person you can't tolerate: maybe it's you . . . He tolerates you.

Standing on Mars Hill, among pagan philosophers in Athens, Saint Paul says, *"In God we live move and have our being, as some of your poets have said."*

You literally exist in God. His Word became flesh and told us, *"I am the way, the truth and the life."* That means that anytime anyone finds the Way, the Way has found them. Anytime anyone tells the truth, the Truth is telling them. And anytime you refer to your *own* life, you confess that you stole God's Life.

God is Love. And that means that Love is not your idea. You are Love's idea. You literally exist in God, and God obviously, constantly, continuously tolerates you . . . But can you tolerate Him?

Imagine if God went out of stealth mode and you suddenly realized: *"It's alive!"*

- In the newspaper, I read about a man who had been pronounced dead, but regained consciousness after twelve hours, in a coffin.
- Upon discovering this man alive, the paramedic that found him collapsed in shock and died.
- He suddenly realized: It's not dead. It's alive.

Imagine if the entire creation spoke and said "Hi...

- I am the beauty in every sunset
- I am the way that everything and anything happens
- I am the truth that binds all things together
- I am the Life in all things and even in you.
- I am outside the Big Bang
- I am the breath of God behind the veil in the Sanctuary of your own soul.
- I am that I am and you are entirely because I am."

Imagine if you suddenly realized:

It's alive. It wants me. And it's literally everywhere that anywhere.

Imagine if you sat down to eat a cheeseburger and the Cheeseburger spoke:

- I am the light that has entered the dust and produced the fruit called wheat, which now takes the form of this tasty whole grain bun.
- I am the Life that was sacrificed to make this savory, medium rare hamburger patty, for which you did not say, "Thank you."
- I am the Good, who is constantly giving Himself to you as a gift, but whom you constantly take as a commodity—you have objectified me.

Imagine if you suddenly realized that God is not only good, but that "God alone is good," which means He is the good in everything.

Imagine if you suddenly realized that you had taken the life of the Good, the way Eve took “knowledge of the Good” from the tree in the Garden?

You know, *if* Jesus actually is “The Way, the Truth and the Life,”
Then, any time you demand *your way*, you wound *the Way*.
And any time you tell a lie, you break the Truth.
And any time you think “This is my life,” you take the Life, that is Jesus.

If God really *is* Love, then anytime you sin, you crucify Love.

Scripture reveals that the entire law is summed up in one word and that is Love.
So all sin is an intolerance of Love—who is God, who literally tolerates all things, for He creates and sustains all things, except the no-things, which are the sins and illusions in which you’re trapped right now.

Imagine if you suddenly realized, it’s alive, it wants me, it’s everywhere, it’s Good, it’s God, and I have crucified Him time and time and time again...

And time and time and time again He has let me... He has tolerated me.
I think you’d drop dead or burst into flames.

That realization that you are not in control and God is in total control,
That realization that you are utterly and constantly dependent on
The Grace of the One that you constantly abuse—
That sudden realization of absolute Grace would kill you . . .
Or at least kill the you, that you *thought* was you . . .
That’s the you that you thought you had constructed—your psyche.
Grace unravels our psyche.

The revelation of the real Christ, would kill the anti-Christ, which means imitation Christ, and by that I mean your psyche, your arrogant ego.

- That thing that is intolerant of yourself and everyone else.
- That thing that refuses to forgive, for it thinks it is its own creator, savior, and judge.
- That thing will die in the manifest presence of the living God, who is absolute Love and whose word is reality it’s self.

The revelation of God’s tolerance obliterates your intolerance.
I’m saying the revelation of Grace obliterates your sin . . . and saves you.

Understand? God is not intolerant of us.
But we are profoundly intolerant of God.

Isn’t that the most obvious point of Good Friday?
God didn’t nail *us* to that tree. We nailed *Him* to that tree.

To be intolerant of God is what we call hell.

- To be intolerant of The Way is to be lost.
- To be intolerant of The Truth is to be trapped in an illusion.
- To be intolerant of The Life is death.
- And to be intolerant of Love is to be entirely alone.

And that's why you should hate cheating on your taxes, slandering your neighbor, committing adultery, hoarding your riches and refusing to forgive. That's why you should hate sin. Sin teaches you to lust for hell and hate heaven.

Salvation is the ability to tolerate God and His Word, which upholds all things, including earth and heaven—and even you!

Listen to what Jesus said, *“Blessed is he that is not offended at me... (he that tolerates me).”*

Do you remember why they nailed Him to that tree?

It was because He was so tolerant of Romans, Samaritans, Syrians, tax collectors, sinners and whores. And He was so very intolerant of those that would not tolerate His tolerance.

It was religious people that took His life on the tree, and posted a guard at the tomb, for they wanted to keep the Word of God in their box. Now, Jesus did say, *“No one comes to the Father but by me...”* but it was right after He said, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”* Well, you can go just about anywhere and find, way, truth, and life... And the Way, the Truth, and the Life is Jesus. On that day, Judgment Day, all people will see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ as they stand before Him seated on His glorious throne—from which I expect Him to say, *“Hi... my name is Jesus.”*

- I expect those that loved Way, Truth, and Life—to say, *“Hi! ...I am so pleased to learn your name and I'm so happy to be home.”*
- And those folks that tried to keep the Word in their box, and sell it on the street like a pimp sells a whore—I expect them to scream in terror and hide themselves under the mountains, where they'll weep and gnash their teeth, until they finally surrender their *intolerance* to the furious *tolerance* of the living God.

If you're an unbeliever, on behalf of the institutional church, I apologize—for we have objectified God, kept His Word in our box, and sold Love for our own profit.

Of all people, Mary of Magdalene knew how that felt, and just how much it hurt.

- Well God is not intolerant; we are.
- God does not have anger issues; we do.
- God is not divided; we are divided.
- And God does not change . . . but Mary did.

Mary and “the other Mary,” went to the cross.
And it didn't change God. It changed them.

They went to the cross and they heard Jesus pray,
“Father aphaes—(Father let them, tolerate them, forgive them).”

They went to the cross and saw that God didn't nail us to the tree, but we nailed God to the tree, and God let us...

And isn't that the obvious point of Easter?

God is insanely, relentlessly and absolutely ...Good.

They went to the cross and they saw that the good we took was the Good. We had always been given and forgiven by God Himself and His living Word. Then they knew, not because they took knowledge of the Good, but because they were known by the Good—the living Good.

And now,
The tree of knowledge had become the tree of life.
They were no longer harlots who used love for their own reasons . . .
They were the Bride who surrenders to Love, who is the Reason.

They went to the tree in the Garden and watched God give them His heart.
Jesus *“from the bosom of the Father he has made him known,”* wrote John the beloved.

The atonement is not something accomplished in God, as if He changed.
The atonement is the heart of God revealed in time . . . and it changes us.

It creates faith in us . . . and faith is the capacity to tolerate God.
So Jesus said, “Hi” and the Marys did not die or burst into flame.

Matthew 28: 9 and 10

“And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hi!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. “

They did not die, but they were... *smitten*—by the revelation of Love.

“Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers... they will see me.”

So, I (the other Mary) am telling you, I think Jesus is saying “Hi” all the time.
And soon you will see Him.

When you find the way, (like to your friends house), Jesus is saying “Hi.” (I think He’s actually the way we get everywhere that’s anywhere.) He is all progress.
When you laugh at the truth, revealed in a Joke, Jesus is saying “Hi.”
When your dog licks your hand & wags his tail, Jesus is the life & He’s saying “Hi.”
Say “Hi” back... say “Thank you Lord for the dog.”

When you eat a tasty cheeseburger Jesus is saying, “Hi;” and maybe “Hey, you didn’t make this burger, maybe you could thank me for this burger.”
Say, “Hi Jesus and thanks for the burger.”

When you see a beautiful sunset, Jesus is saying, “Hi;” and maybe . . . “Hey Peter, did you notice this beauty is free? I am free. You don’t pay for me.”

When you experience *the Good*, Jesus is saying “Hi.”
And when you experience *evil*, you long for the Good, so Jesus is still saying “Hi,” and “Don’t you long for me to come fill you, and all things, with myself?” “Don’t you long for me to come fill all those empty places in you?”

And when *you* love, Jesus is saying, “Look, I’m filling you now—from the inside out.”

On that day, He would like you to know it was Him, and so He’ll say, “Sweetheart, it was me in the sunset, and me in your dog, and even me in the cheeseburger. It was me that hung on the

tree and gave you your life. It was me, and so now would you allow me to get out of the box—no stealth mode? Would you tolerate me as I AM?

Jesus is saying, “Hi” and soon you will see Him.
And on that day, He would like to be entirely familiar to you.
He is the Groom. You are the Bride.
He will not rape you, and so right now He is romancing you.

The heart of the Harlot who thinks she must pay or be paid, will not endure the free and furious Love that is the Great Bridegroom.

So . . .

At the cross, God destroys our heart of stone, and gives us His heart of flesh.

At the cross, the Lord washes our garments in his blood, making them white.

At the cross, God gives you one of these

[Peter turns and looks at the wedding dress hanging on the cross]

And He’d like you to wear it . . .

At least by faith. (OK *guys*? by faith)

Actually, it is Faith “The righteousness of faith” is your wedding garment, which Jesus purchased with blood. Say, “Yes” to the dress!

Paul Tillich wrote, “Faith is the courage to accept acceptance.” Faith is the courage to tolerate God’s tolerance of you. Faith means Trust; and Trust enables you to relish God forever, immersed in God.

On the other side of this table . . .

You are no longer in control.

You no longer pay or are paid.

You are no longer the harlot; you are the Bride.

I read of a young bride who died moments before her wedding. The family decided to bury her in her wedding dress. Well, every believer dies moments before his wedding, or her wedding, or at least the wedding feast—it’s called the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Communion

So, on the night He was betrayed, the beginning of *that* day, by all of us His harlot Bride. Jesus took bread and broke it saying this is my body, which is given to you. And He took the cup saying, “This is the covenant. It’s a marriage covenant—this is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you; it’s my blood.”

He not only tolerates you, He gives His life for you, that you would tolerate Him too. I mean this. Listen closely: He’s crazy for you, and He wants you to be crazy for Him too. He’s calling you to His table, which turns into a feast. It’s a wedding feast.

Prayer

Pray, “I have rejected Love, denied Love, and even crucified Love, but now I surrender to Love, in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

[Several worship songs were sung including “Amazing Grace” with the lyrics “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...”]

Benediction

You may think, “A *wretch? Is that true?*” Well you’re an old harlot right? That’s what we do; we buy and sell Love as if we were God Himself, and it turns out we are His creation. We’ve all been harlots, but Jesus knows who you really are—and that is His Bride. So, believe the Gospel. You can confess your harlot ways, but believe the Gospel. You’ve been purchased with His blood [Peter points to the wedding dress hanging on the cross], washed in His blood, and that’s who you really are. You just came to His table and even in this world you’ve begun to commune with the Living Word. Now you’re a little bit pregnant, so go give birth to Jesus out in the world.

You see? You are Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and you are the Other Mary. In His name, believe the Gospel and live!

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