

Remembering His Name

John 20:10-18

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

“So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 11:27

How does one come before the communion table in a worthy manner? Apostle Paul states the key to remembering rightly the Lord’s death until He returns starts with an examination of oneself. To approach He who is holy one must first confess the logs within one’s eyes, you know those compartments of one’s life that are still worldly! If only confession was merely an intellectual exercise of speaking the “right” words rather than by the grace of God turning away from sin, then this task would be quite easy. At minimum should not the Lord’s table be a passionate invite to have our Gardener Jesus come and pluck the weeds of sin while watering our plants of righteousness?¹ Before this can happen, though we must deal with our biggest sin of all, indifference! Our passion and “conceptions of our Lord are so poor and low, that if He were to come to us in even a moderate degree of His glory, we should fail to apprehend His presence.”² Before we come to the Lord’s table we must pray that God would make our hearts responsive to His kingdom and stir up such fiery passion in our souls³ that through His power we might break through our iniquities, the demons and powers of this dark world (Ephesians 6:12) and cry out Abba Father my soul will never stop longing for Your embrace, for You alone my heart’s desire and portion! As we draw nearer to our Lord we must refuse to leave His table and look back again at the “sepulchre of self or the world where one only finds things of death,”⁴ but instead with a childlike faith we are to honor the Lord by constantly listening to His often still, small voice and by inviting Him to never stop plowing furrows of righteousness in our hearts!⁵ To learn how important it is to approach the Lord’s table rightly we are going to examine the story of Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus at the tomb. In this remarkable event⁶ we are going to learn that the keys to taking the communion table in a

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 680.

² C. H. Spurgeon, [“Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 679.

³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 676.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 682.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 675.

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1569.

worthy manner are turning away from a life of sin, praying for faith, seeking the master, hearing, and acknowledging His voice, and rejoicing for He is our Lord!

Mary Magdalene

We do not know a great deal about Mary Magdalene so we must be careful to distinguish between fact and what is conjecture.⁷ It can be quite challenging to not mix up the identities of the Mary's in the New Testament: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Mary of Bethany, and Mary of John Mark. By the seventeenth



century “Mary Magdalene” was thought to have been a reformed prostitute⁸ and many thought she was the unnamed sinner who anointed Jesus’ feet with an alabaster jar of perfume (Luke 7) but there is no evidence to prove either of these assertions to be true.⁹ There are some things that we do know for a fact about Mary. First, as her name indicates her hometown was Magdala, a small town on the western shore of the sea of Galilee.¹⁰ Second, Mary had been an object of Christ’s grace for she had seven demons casted out of her (Luke 8:2). Third, Mary

Magdalene “appears in all four Gospels as a follower of Jesus (Luke 8:2) and at critical moments in Jesus’ story: the foot of the cross (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25) and the tomb (Matt 27:61, 28:1–10; Mark 15:47–16:11; Luke 24:1–11; John 20:1–18).”¹¹ Fourth, Mary Magdalene was a woman of means for she was counted amongst the women who followed and provided for Jesus (Mark 15:40-41) and along with Mary the mother of James and Salome purchased spices to anoint Jesus’ body (Mark 16:1).¹² And finally as we will learn shortly Mary Magdalene lingers at the tomb and is the first person to see the risen Christ!

⁷ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1571.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1571.

⁹ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1571.

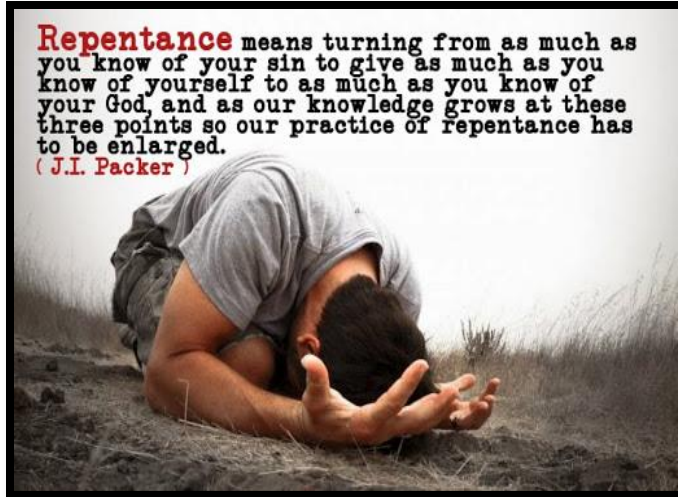
¹⁰ Logos Fact Book

¹¹ Logos Fact Book

¹² Logos Fact Book

Turning Away from a Life of Sin

The first thing we learn about Mary's life that is helpful in coming before the communion table is the need to repent and turn towards Jesus. As soon as Mary had the seven demons cast out of her, she obtained a fiery passion and a single-minded devotion to seek only her Lord. Living in a world where tolerance of diverse views is celebrated the Bible has become



one voice amongst many! If we want to honor the Lord at His table then we must become like the Psalmist and learn to hate and turn away from anything in life that entices us to break God's commands (Psalms 119:128). When Paul says we ought to examine ourselves this is far from an easy task for the "darkness in our souls" clouds our judgment.¹³ To identify those sins that still entangles us (Hebrews 12:1), even those who have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) need help from the Spirit of truth (John 16:13) to reveal those planks hidden deeply within our

self-seeking passions (Matthew 7:1-5)! Once we know our sins, the next step is to confess them to God with the assurance that He who is just and faithful will cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). While this sounds easy, we must not forget that "confession" in this verse is not merely with one's lips to obtain cheap grace, as if God would ever forgive one who "secretly" continues to lust and still see the sin as pleasurable. Instead through the power of the Spirit repentance is an invitation for God to "sweep clean" (Luke 11:14-28) our temples (1 Corinthians 3:16-17) clean by replacing our desire to sin with a fiery passion to walk in the footsteps of Christ so that we might please the Father in heaven (Psalms 119:133)! So, in reverence of He who bought you at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20) and is your heart's desire and portion (Psalms 16:5-11), basking in His love take the time right now to bow and pray to the Lord that He might show you your sins so that through repentance and by His grace and power you might be forgiven and partake of His table rightly!

Praying for Faith

Early on the first day of the week while it was still dark Mary went to Jesus' tomb and finding it empty went and told Peter and John (verse 10).¹⁴ Upon seeing the strips of linen cloth

¹³ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 680.

¹⁴ Augustine of Hippo, "[Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John,](#)" in *St. Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, vol. 7, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-

lying where the body of Jesus used to be the disciples left believing something usual had occurred (20:1-10).¹⁵ Not understanding the significance of the empty tomb¹⁶ Mary stays behind



weeping for in her mind the Lord's body had been stolen which in her day was "abuse of the dead, a most horrifying thing."¹⁷ As she wept Mary bent down and looked into the tomb and saw two angels one at the head and one at the foot of where Jesus' body used to lie (verses 11-12). Any other time in her life the appearance of such angelic beings would have invited reverent fear in her heart¹⁸ but due to her tears and utter brokenness she could not focus on anything but finding the dead body of her Master! She told the angels she was crying because she knew not where her Lord laid but in response, they said

nothing! "Sensing the presence of another near the tomb" Mary turns around and sees Jesus standing there but does not recognize Him¹⁹ either due to His appearance being in another form, her sight being divinely altered like the two walking to Emmaus²⁰ or due to not thinking clearly because of a cloudy, grief-stricken mind²¹ whose faith and hope had been dashed upon the day of Christ's crucifixion.²² Instead of seeing the man before her as her Master she only saw an enemy gardener who stole the body of her Savior²³ so she demanded He reveal the location of Jesus' body so that with the strength of love she might somehow carry her Savior back to His

Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 436.

¹⁵ Merrill C. Tenney, "[John](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 190.

¹⁶ D. A. Carson, "[The Gospels and Acts](#)," in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 1935.

¹⁷ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 374.

¹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 676.

¹⁹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 374.

²⁰ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 375.

²¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 679.

²² James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1570.

²³ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 680.

own.²⁴ We should not in our privileged position of hindsight look down at Mary for none of the disciples up to this point understood the significance of an empty tomb either!²⁵

The second thing we learn from Mary is how easy it is to lack faith at the communion table. If a band of disciples and women who accompanied Jesus for the three years of His ministry failed to grasp how wide and long and high and deep was the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18)



who gave His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), should we be surprised that if we are not careful, we too will callously approach the Lord's table with scales of unbelief over our eyes and compartments of heart as stony as that of Pharaohs? While we cannot be like doubting Thomas and thrust our hands into the scar torn side of Christ to alleviate our unbelief, we certainly can be like the father of the demon possessed boy and cry out to Jesus "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)! To examine oneself before coming to the communion table is not just about

turning away from sin that so easily entangles but also turning towards the one who freed us at the price of His very life! Jesus does not want us to treat His table with religiosity, a ceremony performed without heartfelt gratitude,²⁶ but instead as an invitation to remember with childlike faith that He who rose from the dead can raise our hearts from depths of depravity and unbelief that keeps us distant from His presence. So, let us right now take the time to pray and listen, repent, and keep asking Jesus for help until we hear His often still small voice say, "you have done what is needed to approach My table with a clean heart and because of your faith in Me I have removed your mountain of unbelief (Matthew 17:20)!"

Seeking the Master

The third thing we learn about Mary's life that is helpful in coming before the communion table is how important it is to seek the Lord with all our hearts, minds, and souls. Though her faith and hope had died²⁷ during her three days of weeping, her love was so strong that not even

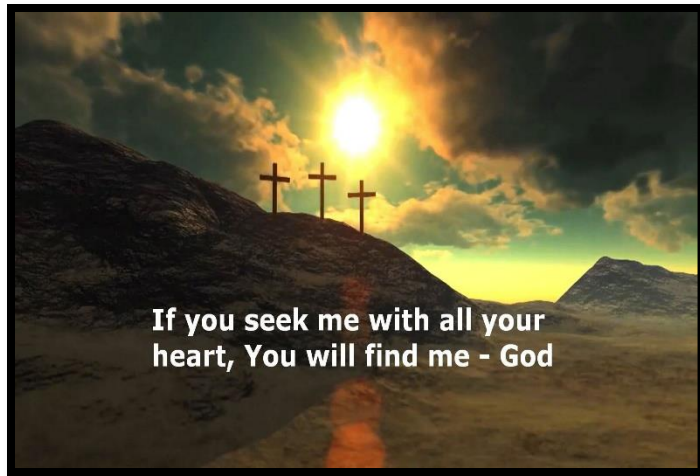
²⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 681.

²⁵ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1570.

²⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 675.

²⁷ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1573.

Peter and John returning home (verse 10),²⁸ the presence of angelic beings²⁹ or the reality that she would not be able to carry a full-grown man's body³⁰ prepared with about 100 pounds of spices,³¹ would stop Mary from confessing and asking for the body of her Lord!³² If the words "crucify Him, crucify Him"³³ have any meaning to us then surely at His table we can offer Him



some passion! "Hunger and thirst after the Lord Jesus are blessed; for He who created them will satisfy them. Oh, that the Lord would cause us to faint and pine after Himself more and more, and then visit us with that which is our soul's only fulness, namely, his precious, priceless self!"³⁴ What could ever be more precious to us than to be embraced by the outstretched arms of our Lord³⁵ who never stops inviting us to present our yokes (Matthew 11:29), repent of our sins, and allow the Potter's loving

hands to mold us into His holy image (Isaiah 64:8)? And yet in our examination of self we must humbly admit that too often we are like Mary and have not seen or in many instances outright rejected the "divine, majestic, delightful and hallowing presence"³⁶ of our Lord, Savior and King! We see dimly and often are outright blind for in seeking knowledge and religion³⁷ we have neglected how intensely our spirit needs to spend time under His wings, basking and being

²⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 673–674.

²⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 492.

³⁰ Merrill C. Tenney, "[John,](#)" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 190.

³¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1573.

³² C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 677.

³³ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1572.

³⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 677.

³⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 679.

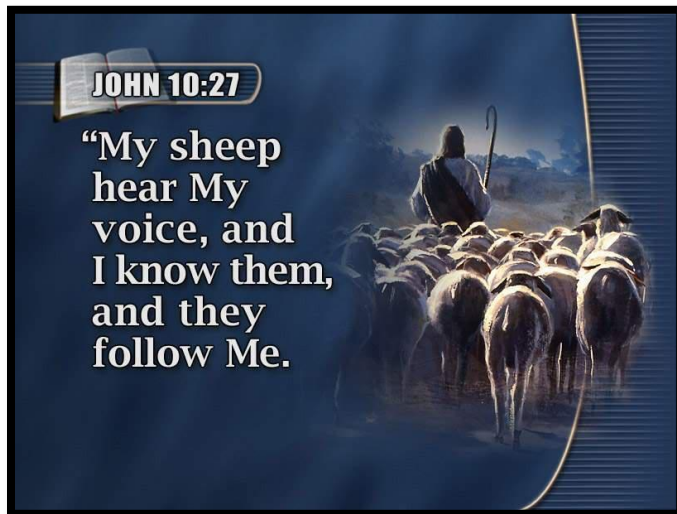
³⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 678.

³⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 676.

transformed by His glory! So, with souls on fire for Him,³⁸ may we humbly draw nearer with the assurance that the Incarnate Son of God will answer our pleas and make His presence known to all that seek Him (James 4:8)!

Hearing and Acknowledging His Voice

The fourth thing we learn about Mary's life is how important it is for seekers to hear and acknowledge the voice of their Master! When Mary mistaken Jesus for the gardener and naively asked where He had placed the body, it took but to hear her name from the lips of her Master³⁹



for her scales of unbelief to give away because when the Good Shepherd calls, the sheep know His voice (10:3-4)!⁴⁰ It is in that precious moment that Mary experienced her own resurrection for the faith and hope⁴¹ that died at the cross was now reborn in the light of it! Mary turned and shouted now with tears of joy "Rabboni" which meant "dear Lord" or "Teacher"⁴² and fell before Jesus, clasped His feet, and refused to let go until He assured her, she would not lose Him again!⁴³ If you feel estranged from Jesus and feel like your prayers are not being heard, much less answered; meditate, pray,

and in utter submission cry out to your Shepherd and He will speak words into your heart with such authority and love that your soul will be overwhelmed with joy that yes the Master knows you by name! No pastor, especially me, can speak into your heart but with a single word and have such a profound affect on your soul!⁴⁴ Like Mary we need not fear that our sin of indifference would permanently drive Jesus away for when we are at our lowest depravity our

³⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 676.

³⁹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1574.

⁴⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 741.

⁴¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 375.

⁴² Merrill C. Tenney, "[John,](#)" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 191.

⁴³ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 376.

⁴⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene,](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 683.

Shepherd is still seeking and is willing to rescue and put our feet on His path of righteousness for His name's sake. So, I encourage you to bow your knees and ask your Shepherd to show His presence in your life, moulding and shaping you so that with boldness and in His name so that you might rightly approach His table.

Rejoicing: I Have seen the Lord

The final thing we learn about Mary's life that is helpful in coming before the communion table is how important it is to put the knowledge of our Savior into action. At the end of today's passage Mary obeys her commission⁴⁵ and goes to the disciples and tells them "I have seen the



Lord." To not know about Jesus is "an ignorance as dark as death,"⁴⁶ but to know Him and hide His light within (Matthew 5:15-16) disrespects the One who stretched His arms upon that cross and invited all who believe in Him to become His children (John 3:16)! Let me finish by reviewing the other points of Mary's life that are helpful in preparing us for the communion table. For instance, may our prayers not be vain repetitions (Matthew 6:5-14) of self-seeking (James 4:1-3), lukewarm Christians (Revelation 3:15-126) but may they be a sweet fragrance of fiery passion

and total submission to give that which is not our own to serve with all our hearts, minds, and souls He who purchased us at the price of His life! To honor Christ His words must resonate so strongly in our hearts that we are willing, with the Spirit's help, to sleigh every goliath of unbelief and take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5) so that in our total submission to His right to rule our lives we might become living sacrifices that are holy and pleasing in His sight (Romans 12:1-2). May we not merely be hearers (James 1:22-25), but may we be like the Psalmist and meditate and obey God's commands not just out of reverence but out of love for our Creator (Psalms 1:2; 1 John 5:3)! Let us pray!

⁴⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, [*The Gospel according to Saint John*](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 494.

⁴⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Magdalene at the Sepulchre: An Instructive Scene.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 683.

“Lord Jesus, You alone are my Savior and King. Search me O Lord and if You find any sin within me give me the faith and courage to confess and turn from the evil you so abhor. I confess Lord I often feel estranged from You so in utter submission I the sheep cry out to You my Shepherd to grant me faith as tiny as a mustard seed so that the scales of doubt from my eyes might fall away! May the words “crucify Him, crucify Him” resonate so strongly in my heart that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present or future, or anything else in Creation tear me away from spending all my time in Your loving embrace. Though I have nothing to offer you at your communion table that could ever pay the debt I owe or show You the gratitude You deserve for dying on that hill, what I can and do offer you is my life. Take it, mold it, protect it and if you enable me, I will shout Your name from the mountaintops from now and forever more!”