

Apr 5, 2026 “Our Living Hope”

Discussion Questions & Leader Prompts

John 20:1–18

1. When things feel dark, we often look for signs of hope or sources of comfort. Where do you tend to look for hope or relief when life is hard?

For the leader:

- Help people notice the difference between *true hope* and temporary comfort without shaming either.
- If needed, offer examples from the sermon (distraction, good news, future plans, etc.).
- You might ask: *Have these things ultimately satisfied, or do they leave you wanting something more?*

2. Mary doesn’t recognize Jesus at first—even when he is close to her. Can you relate to a time when God felt absent, but later you realized he was present?

For the leader:

- This may be difficult for some; allow space for “I’m not sure” responses.
- You can reframe: *Looking back, can you see any hints of God’s presence, even if you didn’t at the time?*
- Avoid forcing neat conclusions—honor unresolved experiences.

3. Jesus meets Mary in her grief and simply calls her name: “Mary.” What stands out to you about this moment? What might it mean that Jesus knows and calls us personally?

For the leader:

- Invite reflection rather than quick answers—this is a deeply personal moment.
- You might ask: *How does this image of Jesus compare to how you usually think of him?*
- If appropriate: *What would it mean for you to hear Jesus speak your name in your current season?*

4. The sermon describes resurrection as the beginning of God making all things right—not just a past event, but a present reality. How does this shape (or challenge) your understanding of hope?

For the leader:

- Help distinguish between:
 - optimism (“things will work out”)
 - and resurrection hope (“Jesus is alive, even if things don’t look better yet”)
- If conversation gets abstract, bring it back: *What difference would this kind of hope make in a real situation you’re facing?*

5. Jesus tells Mary, “Do not cling to me... but go.” Why do you think both parts matter—letting go and being sent?

For the leader:

- Draw out the movement from personal experience → shared witness.
- You might ask:
 - *What might “clinging” look like for us today?*
 - *What might it look like to “go” in our everyday lives?*
- Emphasize that this is invitation, not pressure.

6. Mary is sent to tell others, even though her voice would not have been valued in her culture. What does this say about who God uses? Where might you feel hesitant to share your faith or story?

For the leader:

- Be sensitive—this can bring up feelings of inadequacy or fear.
- Affirm that God often works through unexpected people and imperfect stories.
- You might ask: *What would a small, natural step of sharing look like this week?*

Closing Reflection or Prayer

Invite the group to sit quietly for a moment and imagine themselves in the garden with Mary—standing in whatever darkness they may be carrying.

Then, gently invite them to hear Jesus call their name.

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus that he meets us in our grief, that he knows us personally, and that he is our living hope. Ask for grace to trust his presence, to receive his life, and to follow where he sends us.