



From Empty to Full

Bible Study
Leader's Guide

[Please provide: Bibles and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

Theme Verse: "... *Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*"
(Isaiah 6:3b)

During this Bible study, we will look at the women who went to the tomb that first Easter morning. In their grief, they intended to care for the physical body of Jesus. In their sorrow they came to His tomb as empty vessels. But soon, Jesus would fill them with overflowing joy.

Opening Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, You are indeed a most loving and caring God. You daily watch over and take care of us. We are sorry for the times we focus only on the emptiness created by our sinfulness. Allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see the wonderful fullness You offer to us through our repentance and Your forgiveness. Help us to see and better appreciate the great gift You gave to the women at the tomb, allowing them to be the first to receive and share the glorious news of Jesus' resurrection. In the name of Jesus, our risen Savior and Lord. Amen.

Focusing On Our Theme Verse

Read out loud with the rest of your group Isaiah 6:3b from the top of this page.

Holy, Holy, Holy

The repetition of *Holy, holy, holy* emphasizes that we worship the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, CPH, ©2009, study note for v. 3, page 1098). "The term *hosts* refers to military service, the ranks and divisions of troops. Though the hosts of the Lord are often angels, they include His people Israel, the Levites, the 'ministering women' (Exodus 38:8), and all of creation, which God set in order and continues to rule" (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, CPH, ©2009, "The LORD of Hosts," page 1291).

What makes Isaiah 6:3b an appropriate verse for Easter? Isaiah 6:3b praises the Triune God. On Easter, all believers rejoice that Jesus died and rose to save us from sin, death, and the devil.

Empty

What details do you learn from the following verses concerning the women who followed Jesus and who were at His tomb on the first Easter morning?

Matthew 27:55–56: Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee watched from a distance as He was crucified. These women included Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Peter and John (the sons of Zebedee). These women had ministered to Jesus as He traveled.

Mark 15:40–41: The Gospel of Mark tells us that Salome was also there at Jesus' crucifixion.

These women traveled with Jesus and His disciples and ministered to them.

Read Luke 8:1–3. As they traveled with Jesus and His disciples, how did these women work for the Lord? As the women accompanied Jesus and His disciples, they would have heard some of Jesus' preaching and teaching. They also would likely have cooked meals for Jesus and His disciples and would have done other necessary chores for them so that they could preach and teach. Mary Magdalene witnessed Jesus' miraculous healing firsthand when He called seven demons out of her . Luke also names Joanna and Susanna as other women who followed Jesus. These women and others provided Jesus and His disciples financial support (v. 3).

What did these women see, hear, and come to believe as they traveled with Jesus? They would have heard about Jesus' miracles and, like Mary Magdalene, would have witnessed some of them. They would have heard Jesus proclaim that He is the Son of God, sent to save all people from sin. They would have come to believe that Jesus was indeed the promised Savior.

Traveling with Jesus was not an easy task. It was rough living most of the time with few luxuries (of their day) to depend upon. But these women willingly chose to follow the one called the Messiah (Christ), the Anointed One. They were blessed to see His coming in their lifetime and to witness His servant leadership.

As the events of Good Friday unfolded, the hearts of these women were broken as they watched from a distance as Jesus was crucified on the cross. They experienced complete emptiness. The One who was to save them and all people was dead. All their hope was gone with Him.

Share a time when you felt this type of emptiness. Answers will likely include the death of a loved one, cataclysmic life events like fire, flood, tornado, and other natural disasters, and diagnosis of illness/disease in a family member or themselves.

But God did not leave the women in their empty state. He had a plan for them just as he has a plan for you and me when we feel lost, alone, and empty.

Full

Read Mark 16:1–8.

Put yourself in Mary Magdalene's sandals. She had walked with Jesus since He cast the demons from her. She had heard firsthand much of His teaching. She believed He was the promised Savior. Then she watched Him suffer in anguish and die. Mary walked to Jesus' tomb on that first Easter morning with an empty, aching heart. How did the hearts of Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb change upon hearing the angel's words? Instead of sorrow, their hearts were filled with *trembling and astonishment* ... for they were afraid (v.8).

Read John 20:11–16.

The instant Mary Magdalene recognized Jesus, her Teacher and Master, her heart, her soul, and her faith were filled to overflowing.

Share an instantaneous moment that you have experienced when joy filled your heart as it did Mary's. While these do not compare with meeting Jesus face-to-face, some joyous moments in this life might include being present at the birth of a baby, watching a child/grandchild get married, or receiving a clean bill of health after a long-suffering illness/disease.

Earlier that morning, even in their grief, the women continued to do what was needed. Just as they had cared for Jesus during His time of earthly ministry, on that first Easter day they had planned to continue to care for Jesus at the tomb to complete the preparations for the burial of His body. But Jesus had a larger task for these women – Mary Magdalene in particular.

Read John 20:17–18.

After she recognizes Him, what special job does Jesus give Mary Magdalene? Jesus said to Mary, “Go to my brothers (His disciples) and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (v. 17) Mary was to tell the disciples that Jesus is alive.

Reread John 20:18. Mary proclaims to Jesus’ disciples, “I have seen the Lord.” How do we “see” the Lord today? While we do not physically see Jesus as Mary Magdalene did, Jesus reveals Himself to us today through His Word and Sacraments.

As believers in Jesus, He gives us the same job He gave Mary Magdalene on that first Easter morning. In this Easter season, to whom might you joyfully announce the truth of Jesus, our risen Savior? Encourage participants to think of a specific individual with whom they can share the Good News that Jesus died, rose, and lives forever for them. Then encourage them to actually share this truth with this person.

Closing Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us this time in Your Word and for blessing our study of these women on that first Easter morning. We ask as You did for Mary, to embolden us to tell the Good News daily of salvation to this hurting world in which we live. We ask for opportunities to declare, “I have seen and know the Lord.” Strengthen us to proclaim the truth of Christ to those emptied by sin and hurt, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, they may be filled with the joy of believing that You have died and risen to give forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who trust in You. We pray this in the name of our Lord, Teacher, Master, and risen Savior, Jesus. Amen.

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