

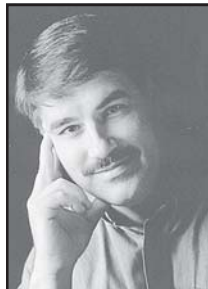
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Body, Mind and Spirit **Don't hold me!**

By **Todd Outcalt**

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One of the most fascinating aspects of the resurrection narrative (as found in John) is when Jesus addressed Mary Magdalene and said, “Do not hold me, for I have not yet returned to the father” (John 20:17). I’ve often wondered about the significance of these words. Were they meant to convey emotion, an existential reality, or a promise?

But lately, I’ve come to see the theological weight of these words and what they might mean for us who are on the other side of the resurrection.

We live in a time when people grapple to supersede others with truth or power. Even God is not immune from our desire to control, to dictate what God will do, or must do, on our behalf. Many times, we may believe that we have some theological truth that others do not possess (we have Jesus - you don't!) or that our level of spirituality is somehow superior to others (we know Jesus - you don't!). Wars have been fought, are still being fought, in part to prove that God is on our side, to show that we are holding onto God.

But in the Gospel narrative Jesus asks us to let him go. “Don't

hold me,” he says. Or maybe it is more imperative than that. “You can't hold me. You can't control me. I will no longer be bound by your need to control or dictate what God can and will do!”

We may not recognize this as good news (at first), but indeed it is. It is good news when we realize that our theologies or ideologies about God do not define God's actions. It is good news because we can relinquish control and let Jesus be Lord of all.

One of the predominant theologies of today is a health and wealth theology that essentially says, “We can get anything we want from God. God is here to serve our needs and desires. God is a giver and is going to give us anything we want.” But it is dangerous stuff. Jesus would say, “You can't hold me. I am raised. I am beyond your control.”

This is the good news because, ultimately, being raised with Christ means we are under His control - not He under our control. His call is a challenging one. Go now into all the world. Hold the poor as friends. Hold the sick and the dying. Hold the forgotten and the lonely. Hold the lost.

Doing his work, we realize that we have let go of Jesus - and He is now the one holding onto us.

Todd Outcalt serves as senior pastor of Calvary UMC in Brownsburg, Ind. His new blog is toddoutcalt.blogspot.com and some of his latest writing can be found in digital form on www.Amazon.com.



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