



SERMON STUDY GUIDE

“JOHN 20:1-18”

WEEKLY QUESTIONS

- What stood out to you from the sermon?
- What stood out to you from the text?
- The main theme of John’s Gospel is that by believing in Jesus as God’s son we find life.
 1. How did you find life when reading this passage?
 2. Did you personally find life in a specific way from the sermon this week?
- How did the sermon or passage point you to Jesus?

THE CONTEXT: STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Cultural: The passage is filled with hurry and emotion. Mary runs to the disciples (v. 2) and the disciples run to the tomb (v. 4). Mary also stands outside the tomb weeping (v. 11). Considering their hurried movements and passionate emotions, we notice the character’s disturbance at this moment. One reason they were so disturbed was because of the importance surrounding Jewish burials. Proper burial was so important that when King Saul and Jonathan died, Israelites were willing to fight and give their lives to recover their bodies to bury them properly (1 Samuel 31:8-13). To understand the characters in the story, we must recognize that before they see Jesus, their main concern is that Jesus’s burial has been violated.

Literary: As we read John’s account of the resurrection, we need to remember that John has been building to this moment; to fully understand it we need to know how John has been characterizing Jesus. For John, the story of Jesus and humanity climaxes in Jesus’s death and resurrection. His gospel focuses on revealing Jesus’s identity and intentions. For John, Jesus himself is God existing before the creation of the world with the Father, and from Jesus comes life that Sin cannot defeat (1:1-5). Jesus then willingly lowers himself to become fully human while remaining fully God (1:14). Jesus is the sacrificial lamb who, by his life death, and resurrection, purifies us from sin (1:29) so that we can be healed from the effects of Sin, dwell with God, and bear much fruit (15:9). Jesus’s intentions of redeeming humanity become reality because of his identity of being fully man and fully God, which John consistently affirms. Because Jesus resurrected, we know that Jesus has fully redeemed the human experience to the extent of death so that by aligning our lives with Jesus and trusting his call for our lives, we can have life.

How have you seen Jesus’s identity revealed in your own life?

THE CONTENT: THE WORDS OF JOHN

The details John includes help his audience know what is both physically and theologically happening:

1. This is not a robbery:
 - (v. 6-7). This means that if someone broke in, they were a terrible grave robber. Instead of stealing any remaining spices or the cloths, the things that could be sold for profit, the robber only took the decaying remains of a crucified man. If this were a robbery, the scene would look different, different things would have been taken, and nothing would be neat and folded. This detail indicates that Jesus’s disappearance is not a robbery but something different.
 - John believes that Scripture points to this moment (v. 9). He wants his audience to understand the authority behind Jesus’s death and disappearance. John does not understand these events as a series of unexpected defeats but instead as the demonstration of Jesus’s identity and the completion of his intentions which God has planned from the beginning and scripture has testified to.
2. This is a resurrection:
 - John states that the linen cloths remained in the tomb and Jesus’s face cloth had been folded up
 - As Mary weeps, she beheld two angels (v. 11-12). John does not describe what they look like but where they sit. One sits where Jesus’s feet were and the other his head. This resembles the shape of the “mercy seat” on the Ark of the Covenant which had two angels, one on each side (Exodus 37:6-7). This “mercy seat” in the Old Testament was where the high priest would sprinkle blood to cover sins



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(Leviticus 16:14-16). Therefore, this posture of the angels in John portrays Jesus as the true “mercy seat” where Sin is truly and fully defeated (Romans 3:25). By Jesus’s blood and resurrection, we are purified from Sin for life with God (Hebrews 9:11-14).

- John has additionally mentioned the setting multiple times. Jesus is buried in a garden (19:41) and now, Mary mistakes Jesus for a gardener (v. 15). The Biblical story begins in a garden (Genesis 2) and the resurrection is set in a garden. This suggests that Jesus’s work reorders the entire human condition. Sin strips away our dignity and brings disorder in our lives; Jesus heals us in his life, death, and resurrection. The setting of a garden demonstrates this effect of reversal. As Mary stands between the angels and Jesus, John pictures Jesus as the site of our healing, the one who brings healing to our whole lives and rescues us from death so we can dwell with God.

John connects the resurrection to the history of the Jewish people. How does the resurrection connect to your life?

How can you walk closer to Jesus knowing he is the site of forgiveness and victory?

THE CONTACT: HOW THE PASSAGE IMPACTS US

When the beloved disciple entered the tomb, he saw its emptiness and “believed” (v. 8). For John, belief is the way we find life (3:15; 20:31). By the term “belief” John means for us to place our trust in Jesus and align our lives with God’s grace as we abide in Jesus which results in fruit of godliness. Ideally, we should grow in our trust before figuring out all the answers (20:29).

When Mary saw Jesus, he told her not to cling to him but to go deliver the message (v. 17). He told her not to cling to his physical body because she would now (post-resurrection) experience his presence not through his physical body but the Holy Spirit and Christ’s spiritual body (the Church). Our belief in Jesus means participation and connection in his spiritual body and the commission to share the news.

In what areas do you need to grow closer to Jesus and abide more deeply in his grace?

How can you participate more in Jesus’s body and share the news?

RESPOND

- How does this passage encourage you, challenge you, or change you in your efforts to become more like Jesus?
- What is one thing you learned about yourself from God’s Word? How will you respond in obedience this week?
- Who is someone you can have a conversation with about what Jesus is doing in your life or invite to join you at a CU Church gathering.

PRAY

... for each other and spend time praising God. Pray that he will show you how to better love God and love people.