

John 20

Once again good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to John 20? Next week is our last study in John's gospel, as we'll move on to Deuteronomy in September on Sunday mornings.

Our society holds the phrase "I love you" in the highest regard, which it should. Those are very powerful and impactful words. However, the phrase "I love you" doesn't contain the 3 most powerful words. The three most powerful words ever uttered, ever spoken, ever thought upon, are HE IS RISEN!!!!

This morning we study the glorious resurrection of Jesus.

The title of this morning's message is THE RESURRECTION.

Would you stand with me as we read verses 1-2 and then we'll pray? **1 Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."**

LETS PRAY

For thousands of years skeptics have denied the resurrection of Jesus. The French philosopher Voltaire proudly proclaimed that Christianity would pass within 100 years. Voltaire died in 1778. Jesus continues to move.

Friedrich Nietzsche in 1882 declared that 'god is dead'. Nietzsche believed the dawn of science would be the doom of faith. Science has dawned, yet Jesus continues to move.

Every person or movement that has tried to bury Christianity has found themselves in the same position as those who tried to bury Jesus. He simply won't stay in the tomb.

When we go to Israel we take you to the spot where it's believed Jesus' body lay. Several years ago as I waited in line to enter the tomb, there were a group of tourists emerging from the tomb. They were so overcome by emotion they were hyperventilating. Their sobs of painful anguish penetrated the reverent silence of the scene.

But amazingly, standing in front of me were 2 young men, teenagers in fact. One turned to the other and said 'I don't understand why they're so upset; don't they know Jesus isn't in there?' Amen!

1 Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." Now, the other gospels tell us that Mary came with several of the women. So skeptics will point to this as a discrepancy, or an error in the Bible. But that's not the case-John makes mention of Mary because she is the one that ran to his house and brought Peter and him the news of the empty tomb.

Look closely at what Mary said when she brought the news in verse 2. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher and we do not know..." not, "I don't know," but, "we don't know" inferring, that the other ladies were with her, as the other gospels describe.

And it's a reminder of what we talked about last week, how the gospels provide different viewpoints of the same events. They aren't contradictory, in fact they can all be harmonized very easily.

Yet Bible critics like to play up the differences in the various accounts that are given and try to label the Bible as not God's Word.

I personally think these differences in the gospels are further proof of the Bible being the Word of God, because it clearly shows that the writers didn't get together in a conspiracy, and say, "Alright, let's keep our stories straight, this is the way we've got to tell it."

If every story was exactly the same, and all of the details exactly the same, then there would be a strong reason to question whether or not there was not collusion in the gospels. But because we get the accounts from different angles and viewpoints, it shows there was no collusion.

So just like last week with the crucifixion, I encourage you to read all 4 gospel accounts of the resurrection. That's Matthew 18, Mark 16, and Luke 24.

So Mary Magdalene tells the apostles of Jesus' body missing....

3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. Pause for a moment and think about what these guys just went through. They just witnessed their dreams and hopes die on the cross. And now word has gotten to them from Mary Magdalene that Jesus' body isn't in the tomb-so they run to see for themselves.

What was going through their mind as they ran?

I've heard a lot of sermons talking about John outrunning Peter, and Peter was older, John younger, and John more competitive. That may all be.

But there's a deeper truth here that's often unexplored.

When you go through a traumatic event with someone, when you are both firmly in the grasp of deep grief, you stick together. You bond deeper with each other.

Here, John outruns Peter to the tomb, because any earthly bond of grief and remorse pales in comparison to the hope of Jesus Christ.

5-7

5 And he, (John) stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Teenagers, please notice that even after His resurrection Jesus folded His clothes.

SHOW PIC 1 This, of course, brings up the question of the shroud of Turin, as to whether or not it was actually the shroud that was wrapped around Jesus Christ. There are many who believe that it was indeed the shroud wrapped around Christ.

CLOSE PIC 1

I don't know if it is, but it's interesting, and I personally think no accident, that all of the relics that involve the life and the ministry of Christ, and really throughout the Bible the relics have all been lost in obscurity through the years.

I don't think we'll ever find Noah's ark, or the ark of the covenant, or the actual cross Jesus was nailed to, or the coin Peter pulled out of the fish's mouth, or Paul's handkerchief.

God knows our tendency to worship an object. And God doesn't want us worshipping objects; He wants us worshipping Him.

Now the detail of the linen cloths and handkerchief are important because these items indicate no struggle, and no hurried unwrapping of the body by grave robbers.

By the way, graverobbers wouldn't have unwrapped the body anyway, since transporting it elsewhere would be easier and more pleasant if it was left in its wrapped and spiced condition.

8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. John had won the race, and looked in the tomb, but after Peter walks in, John enters also.

John saw the grave clothes and was convinced by them that Jesus had risen. Yet he didn't know what it meant, look at verse 9.

9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. It was love that brought John sprinting to the tomb, and now he believed that Jesus was alive. But his understanding is shallow, it's limited. John doesn't grasp yet what the resurrection truly means.

10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. Now remember the events. Mary went to the tomb, runs back and tells Peter and John, and now she's made her way back to the tomb while the disciples are back to their own homes.

And Mary now is all alone, weeping over the missing body of Jesus. And she stoops down, looks into the tomb and sees....

12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. SHOW

PIC 2 If you remember from our study in Exodus 25 last year, we saw how this moment here in John 20 is a picture of the Ark of the Covenant

Between God's Law inside the Ark, and God's love above the Ark - sat the mercy seat. Remember the mercy seat was where the blood was applied. It's where the demands of the Law and the love of God were reconciled. And at either end of the mercy seat were two angels. **CLOSE PIC 2**

Verse 12 reminds us that Jesus is our mercy seat.

13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." Two angels in white are sitting at the head and foot of where the body of Jesus had once laid. And Mary could care less about the angels. She's upset. Jesus' body is gone and she's inconsolable. Even though she's talking to angels, it doesn't matter. She wants Jesus.

Folks, when we're longing for Jesus no other substitute will do – not football season, not camping trips, not shopping, nothing else will do, not even an angel or two when we're truly longing for Jesus.

It seems every 5-10 years or so, the church gets preoccupied with angels. A fascinating story pops up, gains traction, a bunch of books get written and the Christian community goes on an "angel craze."

Yet here, Mary sees and speaks to two angels, but her heart and mind are focused upon Jesus. We must be on guard, because if we're not careful, a Christian can mistakenly allow even the things of God to distract us from God Himself.

Angels testify of Jesus, they never take His place.

14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Why didn't she know she was talking to Jesus? We're not told...

It could be a spiritual blindness. When the risen Lord joined the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, Luke tells us, "Their eyes were restrained."

Or it could be, that since Mary had concluded that Jesus was dead, and had no expectation of seeing Him alive, she just failed to recognize the living Lord.

Perhaps Mary's near hysteria could also account for her failing at first to recognize Jesus. Maybe her eyes were so filled with tears she could barely see.

Or, could it be that Mary didn't recognize Jesus initially because of His wounds?

**Isaiah 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you,
So His visage was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men;**

His face had just been beaten. His brow was punctured with thorns. His beard plucked out.

Later in John 20 we'll see scars in Jesus' hands and side.

Could Mary have failed to recognize Jesus because His face was scarred and disfigured, not looking like the Man she had known?

In Revelation 5 John sees Jesus in heaven and describes Him as a lamb as though it had been slain.

It's gonna be a shocker when we get to heaven and see Jesus face to face.

It's been said, "The only thing in heaven that's man-made are Jesus' scars."

Read the last part of verse 15 with me.

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." I get so convicted when I read this verse. Remember Jesus was buried in about 100lbs of burial spices, plus He's the size of a grown man. Is it realistic for Mary to say she'll take His body away? No.

But if Jesus' body were there, I believe Mary's love and determination for Jesus would have propelled her to find a way.

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him,[fn] "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). Whatever the reason for her failure to recognize Jesus, the moment He spoke the single word, "Mary," she immediately recognized Him.

This is a reminder of Jesus' words in **John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and

your God.' " We're not specifically told of Mary's posture here, but we assume that Mary fell on her face and grabbed the Master's legs, clutching them, refusing to let go.

Mary Magdalene had just witnessed His crucifixion-now she clings to Jesus with all her might. She wanted Him to stay with her forever.

But with these words Jesus assures Mary she has nothing to fear. Her relationship with Him isn't ending, it's just changing.

Mary, like you and me, will have her relationship with Jesus not in a physical way, but in a spiritual way. Rather than tighten her grip, Mary will need to increase her faith.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,[fn] and that He had spoken these things to her. As an obedient disciple, Mary went to the other disciples and told them that Jesus is alive. And how do they respond?

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled,[fn] for fear of the Jews, ." Pause here.

The message of Jesus being alive didn't send them out into the streets evangelizing. No, they stayed where they were and locked the door because of fear of the Jews. The Jewish authorities had crucified their Rabbi, so it was realistic to think that they might come after the disciples as well.

But in the book of Acts we witness their boldness just 50 days later...

We live in such a dark world today, that if we're not careful, you and I can find ourselves in the same position as the disciples here in verse 19.

The problems we face are so big, and the enemy so overwhelming, that suddenly we can start to retreat and hide in our homes and church, talking about how desperate the situation is, without doing anything about it.

Jesus Christ is risen. Our we living our lives like He is?

... 19 Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you" This is an incredibly dramatic moment summed up in a few short words. Remember the last time these guys talked to Jesus; they were forsaking him in the garden of Gethsemane. Imagine as they were gathered around, wondering what Jesus would say to them given their most recent failures?

They all deserved His wrath and condemnation, didn't they? Instead, His first words after the resurrection oozed forgiveness, "Peace be with you."

Folks there are real consequences for our sins and failures, and the HS will convict us of our sin to show we've transgressed God, but Christ NEVER condemn us. Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,[fn] who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus showed them His scars to convince them that it was really Him. You can imagine their looks of fear and disbelief turning into expressions of incredible joy.

21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Wait what?

Didn't Jesus know about all of their failures?

Didn't He know of their frailties?

Didn't He know how they fumbled their opportunities?

Of course, He did. Yet Jesus tells them that He's sending them out just as the Father sent Him out.

And what did the Father send the Son to do? **Mark 10:45** "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus is sending them, and us, to serve, and give our lives for others.

This is how we know prosperity gospel teachers are preaching a false gospel.

It may not be God's will that all of us be financially prosperous, completely healthy and driving a Mercedes. That's not the life Jesus lived!

Years later, look at Peter's words.

1 Peter 2:18 18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us,[fn] leaving us[fn] an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 "Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth.

AND

James 1:2-4 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces

patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

I don't like these verses. I don't read them and say yippee I get to endure pain, I'm guessing you don't either. But our savior suffered and died for us, why would we ever think following Him would be easy?

So Jesus says I'm sending you out, and what does He do next?

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. The apostles cannot begin their mission without the power of Jesus' risen life. So Jesus breathes on these men and they receive the HS. They become born again.

Remember back in Genesis, as God had breathed His life into Adam and He became a living soul, so now Jesus shares the intimacy of His own resurrected life with the disciples.

This is a foretaste of the Person of the Holy Spirit who is yet to come-we see this in Acts 2 at Pentecost.

23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." This verse is not giving disciples of Christ authority to forgive sins. Only Jesus can do that because He's the one that paid the price as the sinless lamb of God.

Jesus is describing our authority as believers that we can declare the certainty of a sinner's forgiveness by the Father because of the work of Jesus so long as the sinner has repented and believed the gospel.

Which means we can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God's forgiveness through faith in Christ, that their sins are not forgiven, and will result in an eternity in hell.

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the disciples have this amazing encounter with the risen Lord, but Thomas wasn't there. We're not told why Thomas wasn't with them, but notice Thomas isn't criticized for his absence.

25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Thomas is often known as Doubting Thomas, a title that really isn't accurate. Thomas wasn't simply doubting, no he strongly refused to believe. Thomas refused the testimony of the apostles and the women!

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" I think it's interesting that Jesus left Thomas in the dark for 8 days to wrestle with his faith. Can you imagine the other disciples scolding Thomas for his unbelief? But 8 days later, they're gathered together, and Jesus walks through the wall, stands in the midst, and addresses Thomas...

27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." In His mercy and kindness, Jesus gave Thomas what he asked for, showing Thomas the evidence he demanded.

During a bible teaching in this section, there is usually significant time dedicated to Jesus' transporting through the wall, and Jesus' instructions to Thomas to touch Jesus' real wounds.

But this morning I'd like to draw your attention to Jesus' statement at the end of verse 27 **Do not be unbelieving, but believing**

Jesus commanded Thomas to stop his unbelief and to start believing. Certainly, Jesus was generous and merciful to Thomas in his unbelief, but it was time for Thomas to move from doubt and unbelief to faith.

Remember, Thomas was one of the 12 who came back from casting out demons and performing miracles! Yet Jesus didn't even mention Thomas' past faith. Jesus was commanding to Thomas to move forward in faith.

Folks we all have times where we struggle with doubt and unbelief. But the Lord does not want us to stay there. We need to move forward by faith.

I don't know where you're at in your walk with Jesus this morning. Perhaps you're doubting, perhaps there's been more retreating than marching forward by faith.

Confess it to the Lord, and move forward by faith.

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Notice Thomas calls Jesus God, and Jesus does not correct him. This is the transforming power of our risen Lord. How many of us were once doubters of Jesus?

In Acts 10 when Peter went into the house of Cornelius, Cornelius fell at his feet. Peter said stand up, for I'm also a man.

When the people of Lystra started worshiping Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Barnabas ripped their clothes and said, “Stop. We are men of like passions”.

In Revelation 22 when John fell down before an angel, the angel said, “Don't do that”. Paul, Peter, and the angel all refused to be worshiped.

Here Jesus accepted this proclamation of deity for one reason: He is God.

29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas,[fn] because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” When Jesus ascended to the Father, all those who believe would do so without the benefit of seeing the resurrected Lord. Jesus pronounced a special blessing on those who believe without having the privilege Thomas had.

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; This is perhaps the most frustrating verse in the Bible. Just imagine all the wonders that went untold

Other signs were done, but they were done to help people rather than to produce belief. What we have in Johns gospel are the stories, the miracles, the work Jesus did, that we might truly believe and go on believing in Him.

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. John's purpose was not academic; it was not simply that people might believe intellectually that Jesus is the Messiah.

It's been said that if the cross was the payment for our sins, then the resurrection is the receipt, proving that the payment for our sins was fully accepted.