



The Disciples' View

On the Outside Looking In #4 • Easter, April 5, 2026

Introduction

“He is risen!” (“He is risen indeed!”)

I want to welcome you to Easter morning here at Tonganoxie Christian Church!

It has already been a good weekend as we remember the death, burial, and (WOOT WOOT!) resurrection of our Lord. On Friday, we offered a Good Friday service here in the Worship Center, focused on the cross. On Saturday, we had a great time with friends and family in the community with our 2nd Annual Color Run. This morning, at 7:00 AM many of us enjoyed the sunrise* and some acapella worship outside*. After that we had a chance to share breakfast together in the Fellowship Hall. *(Some of you might be enjoying it still! It might not be too late. Grab a donut after service – there might still be some out there!).*

And now, here we are. Telling the old, old story again...because it needs to be told! Easter is a **pivotal moment** of victory!

The Story

If I asked you to sum up the entire the Bible, you could do it in three sentences: *Jesus is coming. Jesus has come! Jesus is coming again.*

Jesus isn't just a main character in the story; **He is the story!** It all points to Him. All of Scripture and all of history had been building up to Jesus' death on the cross (where he voluntarily sacrificed Himself to pay for our sins)...but the cross the climactic finale. No, it was the starting point to a new beginning, inaugurated by Jesus' defeat of death in resurrection.

Resurrection is the dawn of a new era, which will come to full fruition (hopefully soon!) when He returns, when we are caught up with Him to be with Him forevermore!

Jesus is coming. Jesus has come! Jesus is coming again.

Amen?! Amen!!



Easter is that pivotal moment of victory that encompasses the cross as well as the empty tomb! Easter Sunday is a day to remember and celebrate. We do so with joy. We do so with color. We do so with family and food and attire (*i.e. It's so important that I even wear a suit and tie!*).

And we do all of this because the hard work of figuring out its significance has already been done. We know the truth *because* of what happened on that first Easter morning. And as we talk about it *this* morning, here is the phrase I want you to remember about *that* morning:

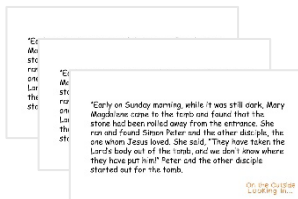


Good News needs someone to go ahead!

Scripture

Our passage today, if you would like to turn to it in your Bible, is from **John 20:1-10**.

Would you please stand to honor God's word as we read it this morning?



“Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. Then they went home.” (John 20:1–10, NLT)

Thank you. You may be seated.



A Reason to Run

Good News needs someone to go ahead!

One week ago on Wednesday, I was walking through the gym downstairs when I received an unusual request. Church members were gathered for Nite Life, our weekly program with a meal and then classes. I had been helping with kids' check-in in the entryway, and I was on my way to a classroom to lead my Read Thru the New Testament class. But as I walked, I passed by the high school and middle school youth gathering for a game before class.

Jordan, our youth minister, called out, "You wanna play with us?"

I hesitated. I was already late...but I do enjoy the chance to connect with our youth. So, I told another sponsor to text my class that I would be late, and I said, "I'm in!"



Next thing I know, I'm sitting on a chair, surrounded by kids, with six beanbags underneath and a pool noodle in hand. I was "The Blind Octopus." The kids had to get the beanbags...without getting hit by my tentacle (aka the noodle).

"On your mark. Get set. Go!"

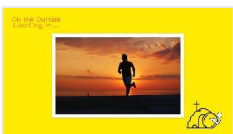
And let me tell you... I went!!! I was flinging that noodle so fast! High, low, left, right, bringing it *aroooouuunnnnd* town and back again. I kept going...and going... and going... interrupted only by the occasional sound of foam meeting flesh (*Thwap!*).

Time was finally called. I had defended my territory. No beanbags lost.

But my arm? Hurt for three days after! I was not prepared for that moment! I hadn't stretched or warmed up. All of a sudden, I was just thrust into action – action with intensity!

I picture today's Scripture passage in a similar way (minus the pool noodle).

Three followers of Jesus have woken up to a slow, somber morning...and then? A new development happens, and they are *running!* They are thrust into action, – action with intensity!



Their bodies might not have been ready to run. Their legs might have felt it later. But in the moment, it doesn't matter that ibuprofen hadn't been

invented yet. This is news about Jesus – their rabbi, their teacher, their Lord. And that’s all the reason they need to run!

A famous Scripture passage from Isaiah 52 says,



“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7, NLT)

As our disciples run, they aren’t even sure if it *IS* good news they bring. They just know that it is *news*, and they are trying to make sense of it.

After all the running, though, they do. We read this sentence:



*“Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also **went in**, and he **saw and believed**—” (John 20:8, NLT)*

Went in. Saw. Believed.

Those three verbs seem to be the key to understanding this passage. As such, they provide the challenge for us today. They help us see that **Good News needs someone to go ahead!**



“Went In”

“Went in.” This first verb applies to two followers of Jesus – Peter and John.

Who They Are

Peter and John were two of Jesus’ closest followers.

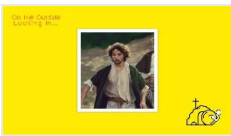


- **Peter:** Originally named Simon, Peter was a fisherman from Bethsaida. He was called by Jesus to be a "fisher of men" and became one of the most prominent apostles, often acting as their spokesperson. Jesus renamed him Peter, meaning "rock," signifying his foundational role in the Church. He is known for his boldness, having been the first to confess Jesus as the Messiah, but he also faced moments of weakness, such as denying Jesus three times before the crucifixion.
- **John:** John, the son of Zebedee, was also a fisherman and is one of the “inner three” of the twelve disciples. He had a close relationship

with Jesus and was present during many significant events, including the Transfiguration and the Last Supper.

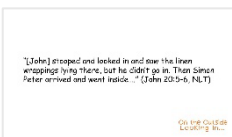
Together, Peter and John are the “Mahomes and Kelce” of the disciples – the two most prominent members of the group. Many stories in the gospels involve these two, so it is fitting that they are here, together, on Easter morning.

Today’s Bible passage is from the Gospel of John – and yes, it is that same John. He is the author of this gospel message. And because it is his own recollection, John has some unique perspectives. He was there! He remembers! So, as he writes, he throws in a few details.



- Did you see what he called himself? The text just says, “... *Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved.*” Context clues make it obvious that the ‘other disciple’ is John, the one writing this gospel account. As the author, John gets to humble brag and call himself “*the one Jesus loved.*” Sorry, Peter. Lol
- He also gets to flex on Peter in another way. “*They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.*” (John 20:4, NLT) Peter’s slow. Lol. That’s a guy thing. And it makes me laugh. John lovingly(?) gives Peter a hard time for not being as athletic.

But once they get to the tomb, John stops focusing on Peter and focuses on the empty grave. What happened? Look at verses 5-6.



“*[John] stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside....*” (John 20:5–6, NLT)

John was fast... but he stopped. He hesitated. He couldn’t go in on his own.

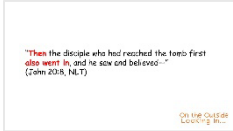
Lead the Way

Can you relate? Sometimes, we just need another person to lead the way.

- To go first across that narrow bridge...
- To take the first bite of that weird dish at a restaurant...
- To break the ice and strike up a conversation with a cute girl...
- To call the doctor and ask about that concerning symptom...

Peter was that kind of leader. He was anything but shy. He had a history of speaking up when no one would, of taking a risk because no one else did. When he arrived at the tomb, he didn't hesitate. He just went straight in.

Only after that did John enter.



“Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first *also went in, and he saw and believed—*” (John 20:8, NLT)

John went in because Peter went in!

Sometimes, we just need another person to lead the way.

The Good News needs someone to *go ahead!*

Church, I challenge you to *go ahead* and lead the way for someone else!

Almost all of you have a person in your life – someone that you love - who doesn't believe in Jesus. They might be on the cusp, but they are scared to go all in. They want to pray, but don't know how. They know there is more to this life, but they don't know where to find answers. They have a God-shaped hole in their life, but they don't understand that Jesus will fill it.

That person needs *you*. That person needs *you* to lead the way. That person needs *you* to step up and pray for them. That person needs you to listen to their questions. That person needs you to lead them to answers. That person needs you to be bold enough to invite them. That person needs to see you live *all in* for Jesus before they can follow.

Help them. Lead them. Be bold enough to take action.¹

The Good News needs *you* to go ahead!



“Saw”

They “went in.” Then they “saw.”

Peter and John could only see because the day was getting lighter.

I love that aspect of our sunrise service. If you ever get the chance to attend, I think it is inspiring to see the dawn's light growing brighter



¹ Ex: “The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all.” (Acts 4:33, NLT)

and brighter as we sing and speak. When the morning sun breaks through the trees, it reminds me of passages like 1 John 2:8,

“For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.” (1 John 2:8, NLT)

On that first Easter, Peter and John can look inside the tomb because the morning light is growing brighter with each passing second..



But they only see that light because of a different follower of Jesus: Mary Magdalene.

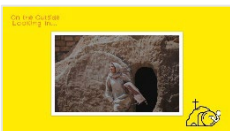
- **Mary Magdalene** was a Jewish woman from the town of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Her name appears twelve times in the Gospels, more than most apostles, highlighting her prominence in Jesus’ ministry. According to Luke 8:1-2, Jesus cast seven demons out of her, indicating she had suffered severe physical, emotional, or psychological distress. After this healing, she became a faithful disciple, supporting Jesus and His ministry, often alongside other women who provided financial and practical assistance.

Peter and John could see because it was **getting lighter**; Mary, though, came when it was **still dark**.



Why was she so early? The gospel writers explain why. In Luke 23:54–56, we are told that since Jesus was crucified on Friday, his burial was close to sundown. And for Jewish people, sundown on Friday is the beginning of the Sabbath Day – a day when no work is permitted. From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, the Sabbath rules prevented Mary from going to the tomb to care for Jesus’ body. As of sundown Saturday, she had religious *permission* to go do work, but after sunset (prior to Thomas Edison’s invention of the lightbulb) there would be insufficient *illumination* to do anything. So, Sunday morning was her first practical opportunity to go.

And Mary was ready. The other gospels fill gaps in John’s writing, helping us see the full scene. We know other women walked with Mary, and some continued all the way to the tomb while Mary ran back to town and gave her report.



But here’s what I want you to know. Peter and John can only see the empty tomb because someone else was looking first.

They were sleeping while Mary was prepping. They weren't looking at the tomb that morning! But Mary was. She had the eyes they needed.

Help to Look

Sometimes, we just need another person to see what we don't.

This week, again at Wednesday night, I was checking in some of our wonderful kids and a mom said, "We just watched the rocket!"

I stared at them, trying to understand. "You what?"

"The rocket launch. We were just watching it!"

Did you know that the U.S. just launched a rocket to orbit the moon? It's the first manned lunar mission in over 50 years! It's historic! Surely a math and science nerd of a pastor would know and be watching, right?

Nope. I had seen an article or two mentioning it, but I had no idea it was happening. Since then, I've been able to see some footage, and I've been able to go online and see the progress.

But I didn't even see. I needed Macie and Mattie and Maggie Volk to be the eyes I needed.



Sometimes we need that extra set of eyes to see spiritual truth.

Good News needs someone to go ahead and be the lookout!

Church, can you be those eyes to see what others don't see? Can you look for Jesus and see Him at work in situations? Can you call out where you see Him providing blessings and answering prayers? Can you point out His mercies that are new every morning?

We might not see everything. Even Mary misunderstood what was happening! But even if she didn't fully understand, she was looking for Him faithfully!

The ones you care about may not have the eyes to see Jesus at work yet. But you can go ahead of them, looking to the Word for guidance, looking to the situation to see how Jesus is already preparing the way for grace.

Like a trained wilderness guide, you should become skilled at spotting signs of His presence and movement. And when you see something, say something.

Look ahead. Pay attention. Keep your eyes peeled so those around you don't miss what He is doing.²

Good News needs you to go ahead!



“Believed”

They “went in.” They “saw.” And they “believed.”

What did the disciples see inside the tomb that led to belief in the resurrection?

They saw unwrapped fabric and a folded-up face cover.



*The **linen wrappings** (19:40) were on the burial bench.... Jews also used a facial **cloth** for burials (cp. 11:44), which was rolled, wrapped under the chin, and tied on the top of the head. The apostles found this face cloth **folded up** on the bench. John's inclusion of these details counters any suggestion that grave robbers had taken Jesus' body; such...garments would have been stolen in a robbery.³*

The body was gone. It was not stolen...and, oh yes, Jesus had said a thing or two about this before.

“Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus said, “Listen, we’re going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true. He will be handed over to the Romans, and he will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will flog him with a whip and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again.” But they didn’t understand any of this. The significance of his words was hidden from them, and they failed to grasp what he was talking about.”
(Luke 18:31–34, NLT)

“Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus said, “Listen, we’re going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true. He will be handed over to the Romans, and he will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will flog him with a whip and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again.” But they didn’t understand any of this. The significance of his words was hidden from them, and they failed to grasp what he was talking about.”
(Luke 18:31–34, NLT)

² Ex: “The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all.” (Acts 4:33, NLT)

³ *New Living Translation Study Bible* (Jn 20:6–7). (2008). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Peter and John didn't get it then. Peter and John get it now.

The only reason they recalled Jesus' words and understood truth and believed... was because Jesus had gone ahead and tidied up the tomb!



Good News needs someone to go ahead!

Church, let me be clear. The Good News already as someone going ahead of you! Jesus is already going ahead. Just as God did with his people in times past.

“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.”
(Deuteronomy 31:8, NLT)

If you are ever worried that you can't see far enough ahead, or that you aren't a sufficient leader to help others come to Jesus...don't worry. Jesus is already at work!

He goes before you. He prepares a way. He is the firstborn from the dead. He is the Beginning and the End. And that gives us comfort and confidence in our own spiritual growth, in our church's mission, in our sharing of the gospel! Whatever situation you face, Jesus is already there. So trust Him!



Good News has Someone to go ahead! And He's fantastic!

Conclusion

I hope that news is encouraging as we wrap up this Easter sermon and Easter series.

Over the last few weeks, we have looked at people who were on the outside looking in. We've talked about people who failed to see Jesus – to *really* see Him: **Caiaphas** the high priest. **Pilate** the Roman governor. The **centurion** and Roman soldiers. They missed it. They *stayed* on the outside (metaphorically) because they couldn't see, wouldn't see, looked past, or looked too late at Jesus.





But today, we have a chance to be like the disciples, like “the disciples Jesus loved.” They came to the tomb, and they were on the outside looking in (literally!). And when “good news” needed someone to go ahead? Mary was there. Peter was there. Jesus had already been there!

Good News needs someone to go ahead. Will you be that someone?

Prayer

Invitation

If you have already accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then I want to reiterate the challenge: The Good News needs YOU to go ahead. Take the steps you need to take in order to help others see Jesus! If you need prayer for strength, encouragement, or want to lift up a specific person, I invite you to write it on your connection card, or you can come forward during the song and let me pray with you.

If you haven't accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, then I want you to know: He has gone ahead of you! He's working to help you discover the love, joy and salvation that He offers. He has gone ahead in death and resurrection and has a place prepared for those who will follow Him. He's drawing you to Himself! Maybe today is the day to say yes... Again I invite you to write it on your connection card, or you can come forward during the song and let me pray with you.

Good News needs someone to go ahead.

Consider that as we stand and sing...

Sermon Notes

Good News needs someone to go ahead!

A Reason to Run (John 20:1-10)

(Isaiah 52:7; John 20:8)

“Went In”

(John 20:4-6, 8)

“Saw”

(1 John 2:8; Luke 23:54-56)

“Believed”

(Luke 18:31-34; Deuteronomy 31:8)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- Have you ever had a moment where unexpected news made you move immediately into action? What happened?
- Why do you think John stopped at the tomb entrance while Peter went straight in? (John 20:5-6)
- When have you needed someone else to “go first” spiritually, emotionally, or relationally?
- Who helped lead the way for you in your walk with Jesus? Why is bold leadership often necessary for people who are close to faith but hesitant?
- Who in your life may be waiting for you to take the first step—an invitation, a conversation, or an example?
- Mary was looking for Jesus while others were still sleeping. What does her example teach us about spiritual attentiveness?
- Can you share a recent situation where you later realized Jesus had been at work? How can believers become better at “seeing” God’s blessings, answers to prayer, and quiet movements of grace?
- How does knowing that Jesus “goes ahead of us” change the way we face uncertainty?
- What area of your life right now requires trusting that Jesus is already at work ahead of you?
- Pray for boldness to **go ahead**, eyes to **see where Jesus is working**, and faith to trust that **Christ has already prepared the way**.