

That You May Have Life in His Name - John 20:1-18

November 26, 2023

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John 20 today

Lets look at the end of 19:

- Jesus has been laid in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb
- Nicodemus, formerly coming to Jesus by night now comes forward with the spices - 75 pounds - needed to properly bury Jesus.
- Two prominent Jewish leaders now openly following Jesus.
- Whatever guise they had held up with their former Jews and Pharisees → that pretense is now gone → the **firstfruits of radical life change that occurs in those who follow Jesus.**
- In seeing Jesus give his life for his followers, these two have counted the cost and are now publicly counted among those learning to trust in Jesus.

John 20:1-10

Mary goes to the tomb, likely with several other women ("we don't know" - v.2), to complete the hurried work of Friday's burial. There was not enough time to complete the layers of grave clothes and spices before Sabbath began that evening at dinner.

- most scholars believe they are taking the remaining spices and cloths and are going to finish the process of burying Jesus.
- Mary arrives and the heavy stone seal has been removed - she panics, and runs back to Peter and John - "we don't know where they've taken him!"
- Peter and John take off immediately for the tomb, the younger outrunning the older.
- John looks in, sees the grave clothes and belief begins to rise.
- Peter goes in and finds the clothes undisturbed, wrapped up but empty.
- "Jesus appears to have disappeared from the grave clothes in much the same way he will soon appear in locked rooms"¹ full of fear filled brothers and sisters.

Not all Grave Clothes are the Same

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he told the people to remove the clothes from him. Here ... Jesus simply moves through them from one existence to another.

A body removed from the grave → physically no longer there, but altogether different than before.

The two have seen the place where he lay, but they "still did not believe that he must rise from the dead and fulfill the scriptures." (v.9)

So they return to their homes - faith rising ...

¹ Milne - *The Message of John - The Bible Speaks Today*, 296.

John 20:11-18

Mary had apparently followed the two back to the tomb and here she remains alone. She weeps, broken that even in this moment she cannot serve her Lord as he deserves ...

She looks into the tomb and sees two angels, sitting where Jesus's body was. Where death slept, two servants of light ask her, "Why are you weeping?" (v.13). "Because they have taken away my Lord!"

Sensing the presence of another, she turns around and asks the one she supposes to be the keeper of the garden tomb → "Woman, why are you weeping? *Whom are you seeking?*" (v.15).

- Please give me his body back!! If you've taken him I will take him back!

But Jesus will not be taken back to the tomb. He had defeated death, and was never going back in the grave. And so he speaks to her heart, her very soul.

"Mary..." → "Rabboni! - my good and faithful Teacher!"

*"The Good Shepherd had laid down his life and taken it up again. Now he called one of his sheep **by name** and she recognized his life-giving voice (10:4). **The gospel is no mere invitation; it is a summons to glory.**"²*

*** We can spend our lives arguing why this claim or that "Fact" about Jesus could not scientifically be true ... But when a risen Jesus Christ speaks your name and you hear it in your soul all worldly arguments crumble. ***

Do not cling to Me

Jesus here in v.17-18 makes what at first pass appears to be a harsh command to Mary, knowing that her response would be to fall at his feet and hold on to him (i'm never letting go of him!)

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary, you have seen and believed. Jesus is alive. But how you see Jesus will need to change.

"Jesus is trying to help Mary understand from now on, with the exception of these resurrection appearances, Jesus is not to be known by means of touch. The resurrection (and ascension Jesus is here referring to, implies a new kind of relationship with Jesus, to be shared by all disciples in every age and place, that of faith-union through the Holy Spirit sent by the ascending Lord."³

It matters more to Jesus that Mary go - immediately - and proclaim the good news to his brothers & sisters

² ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible - John, study notes - <https://www.esv.org/John+20/>

³ Milne - *The Message of John - The Bible Speaks Today*, 298-299.

“I have seen the Lord” (v.18) → as commanded, she returns to the disciples and made the first claim of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

A few notes on the nature of this claim:

1. The Resurrection of Jesus is Historical

- John continues to bring in specific people at specific places and specific times. “The day of preparation” the “first day of the week” in a specific man’s tomb with days, months, and years being clearly labeled.
- Real space and time that we might read these things and believe. And by believing that we would have life in his name.
- The first hand accounts - first by a woman and then by others in hiding - would not be the right way to spread a wide circulating story.
- The Jews were silent – no one could explain it because no one ever found his body.
- And these accounts are preserved in writing, verified and confirmed across numerous eyewitnesses that not only did Jesus die, but he was seen by hundreds in the weeks that followed.

2. The Resurrection of Jesus is Personal

- As Mary was commanded to go and tell her brothers and sisters about Jesus’ resurrection and his plan to return to “our Father” ...
So too must all followers of Jesus be transformed by Jesus’ triumph over death.
- Because He lives, the disciple is given eternal life.
- Because He defeated death, we no longer fear death.
- Because Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, there is no condemnation for those who “believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord.”

3. The Resurrection is for All who Believe

- In all places and ages → Jesus victory is central to the hope of the gospel.
- Jesus commands Mary to go and tell his brothers and sisters. Jesus could have appeared to them, but tells her first to go and tell them of the gospel.
- “I have seen the Lord” must be transformed into “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

- The gospel is personal, but it is never private. The good news must be shared.

But if these things are true - **what has changed. What does the gospel of Jesus’ defeat of death actually affect?**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands unrivaled as the most radical event in history⁴

By radical we mean “an extreme or substantial change in the existing system.”⁵

- Yes, the system of sacrifices and mediation by priests - guilt atoned for (temporarily) by the blood of animals.
- Yes, the gap between the religious elite and many many obligations placed on the people.
- But even more so, the existing system of life and death itself.

What has changed because of the resurrection?

1. A radical change in the nature of death.

- Prior to the resurrection - all people for all time lived with a constant fear hanging over them - what if today is the day?
 - Every belief system and religion of the world finds at its a core an attempt to deal with the divine and human mortality.
 - All have sinned, and all are deserving of death.
 - Total depravity is not a theory - it is true: we have all inherited sin and choose sin, and all of us deserve death. All people “through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Heb 2:15-16)
- Look at our own culture’s obsession with anti-aging - through youthful attempts to cover up or reverse filters that eliminate wrinkles, a few pounds, or any appearance of gray hair.
 - If we do x, y, or z, then we can delay at least the appearance that this body is dying.
- But Christians now have a revolutionary perspective. A Radical change in our view of death: it could not hold our King. He lives. And all those who are baptized into his name have life in His name. And we are free to live for what lasts.
- *The Radical Change: death is but a doorway into life.*

2. A radical change in the disciples

- Jesus tells Mary - tell my brothers and sisters, “I am ascending to my Father your Father, to my God and your God.”
- *Radical Change: no longer slaves/enemies → brothers/sisters. Friends.*
- “We must believe the tomb is empty because Jesus rose from the dead, was vindicated by the Father, secured our salvation, and brought us into the family of God. Paul told the Romans, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God *raised him from the dead*, you will be saved” (10:9); without the resurrection there is no gospel ... no good news. The best part of the good news is that Jesus won. Death was defeated and eternal life is ours through Him.”⁶

⁴ Carter/Wredburg - Christ Centered Exposition - John, 376.

⁵ Ibid, 376.

⁶ Carter/Wredburg - Christ Centered Exposition - John, 381.

Community Groups:

1. Why does John mention the grave clothes left in the tomb?
2. If the resurrection had never happened, would your life look any different?
3. What would change in your life if the resurrection lived in the forefront of your mind?
4. What impact does freedom from fear of death have on the way you use your time? Your money?