John 20:1-19 | Sunday January 5th, 2025

This morning, we have come to an amazing passage of scripture. Last week we finished John 19 with Jesus' body being taken off the cross. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus made arrangements and tended to the physical body of Jesus. They wrapped Him up with linen and spices, and laid Him in Jospeh's new tomb. After secretly following Jesus, both men took a tremendous risk in publicly showing they believed in Jesus. Jesus had lived a perfectly obedient life and the sacrifice on the cross was finished. Yet, none of it matters if we do not have chapter 20. **Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Christianity is a waste of time.**

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 ESV

> (12) Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
> (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.
> (14) And **if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.**
> (15) We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.
> (16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.
> (17) And **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**
> (18) **Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.**
> (19) **If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

Some were teaching that there was no resurrection from the dead. Paul is very clear that this idea would undo Christianity. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then there is not point to preach, and our faith is empty because it is not based on anything real. If Jesus was still dead then His claims of being the perfect sin offering would be undone. Without the resurrection we are still in our sins, meaning every believer who has died went to hell. If Christianity is just about this life, just about the morality and precepts of Jesus without the hope of eternity then we are to be pitied above all. **Without the promise of heaven, eternal life, the resurrection then living for God is worthless.**

Having an eternal perspective is not a side concept. The hope of the resurrection and eternal life is paramount. Jesus was not simply a moral teacher. **Efforts to lift out the life, worldview, and morality of Jesus while leaving off His sacrificial death and resurrection are pointless**. Thomas Jefferson edited the gospels with this intent. He included what Jesus taught, and His morality but left out what the death and resurrection would accomplish. His edited version finish with Jesus' body in the grave. Paul would have been infuriated! **Jesus' life and teachings matter, because He was resurrected.** He proved that His blood was the perfect payment by conquering the grave and being resurrected. Jesus did not come to teach a new law, He was not just a good moral teacher. The importance of Jesus' resurrection cannot be over stated.

John 20:1-2 ESV

> (1) Now on **the first day of the week Mary Magdalene** came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that **the stone had been taken away from the tomb.**
> (2) So she ran and went to **Simon Peter and the other disciple**, the one whom Jesus

> loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

All four gospels describe the day of the resurrection as the first day of the week, Sunday. It is interesting that the resurrection is not marked as three days from the cross, but as the first day, God had accomplished something new. The other gospels tell us Mary was accompanied by a few other ladies but she was first to the tomb. Jesus had cast out 7 demons from Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2). She had followed Joseph and Nicodemus and saw where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:47). It was early morning at day break, the city was full of people there for the Passover, and a Roman guard was protecting the grave. She was full of emotions and fear. Mary felt an earthquake (Mat 28:2) and then saw the tomb was opened and takes off in a sprint leaving the other women. She goes to John and Peter and her assumption is that Jesus’ body has been taken.

John 20:3-7 ESV

> (3) So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.
> (4) **Both of them were running** together, but the other disciple **outran Peter** and reached the tomb first.
> (5) And stooping to look in, **he saw the linen cloths lying there**, but he did not go in.
> (6) Then Simon Peter came, following him, **and went into the tomb**. He saw the linen cloths lying there,
> (7) **and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head**, not lying with the linen cloths **but folded up in a place by itself.**

Peter and John take off in a sprint to check on Jesus’ tomb. John gets there first but only looks from the outside. Peter gets there and immediately goes in. The linen cloths and face cloth is what made a huge impression on John and Peter. If Jesus body was taken to another grave, then the linen clothes would not still be there. If grave robbers took Him, then they would not have left the expensive spices in the linens. If Jesus merely fainted on the cross and came to then He would have had the same problem Lazarus did.

John 11:43-44 ESV

> (43) When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”
> (44) The man who had died came out, **his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.** Jesus said to them, **“Unbind him, and let him go.”**

Lazarus needed to be unbound from the grace clothes. Jesus was not resuscitated, but resurrected. Jesus’ grave linens were undisturbed but **without a body in them.** The face cloth was folded up neatly and set to the side.

John 20:8-9 ESV

> (8) Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, **and he saw and believed;**
> (9) for as yet **they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead.**

John had stopped at the entrance to the tomb, now he goes in to see. The moment John saw the grave linens He believed. Verses 5, 6, and 8 all use different Greek words for “see.” In verse 5 John took **a quick glance**, then Peter in verse 6 **carefully scrutinized**, and finally in verse 8 John **perceived** what it meant. He believed yet notice how John clarifies **He still did not understand**

how this fit scripture. Jesus' resurrection was not optional, He had to rise from the grave. Listen to the clarity Peter teaches with once He has the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:25-32 ESV

> (25) For David says concerning Him, "'I saw the Lord always before Me, for He is at My right hand that I may not be shaken;
> (26) therefore My heart was glad, and My tongue rejoiced; My flesh also will dwell in hope.
> (27) **For you will not abandon My soul to Hades, or let Your Holy One see corruption**.
> (28) You have made known to Me the paths of life; You will make Me full of gladness with Your presence.'
> (29) "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and **was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.**
> (30) Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,
> (31) **he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ**, that He was not abandoned to Hades, **nor did His flesh see corruption.**
> (32) **This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.**

Peter knows where David's tomb is. His dead body was put into it close to 1000 years ago and it has fully decomposed and seen corruption. Jesus' body on the other hand never saw corruption. David is writing about the resurrection of Jesus. Once John saw the linens He believed but He had not connected all the scriptural dots yet. Jesus was bodily resurrected, this is more than just immortality. **His physical body left the grave clothes and was refashioned into His resurrected body.**

It is an indisputable historical fact that Jesus of Nazareth was condemned to a Roman cross by Pontius Pilate was buried and then His tomb was found empty on Sunday morning. From the eye witness testimonies found in the gospels to references by non-believers the historical evidences are overwhelming. **Even the Jewish lie that the disciples stole the body (Mat 28:11-15) assumes an empty grave**. The most secular historian agrees with these facts. No one disputes that the grave was empty the core issue is what happened to Jesus' body?

John 20:10-12 ESV

> (10) Then the disciples went back to their homes.
> (11) But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept **she stooped to look into the tomb.**
> (12) And **she saw two angels** in white, **sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.**

It appears that this is the first time Mary Magdalene looked into the empty tomb. When she saw the stone moved she took off running to get Peter and John. As she looks into the tomb she saw two angels. One is sitting where Jesus' head was and the other is where His feet were. The angels are not sitting here accidentally **their positions are pointing back to the Mercy seat.**

Exodus 25:17-19; 22 ESV

> (17) "**You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold**. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth.
> (18) And you shall make **two cherubim of gold**; of hammered work shall you make them,

> on the two ends of the mercy seat.
> (19) Make **one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end**. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends.
> (**22**) **There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim** that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

It was between the two cherubim or angels with their wings outstretched that God would meet with Israel. God interacted with humanity over the mercy seat, so that we would not receive what we deserved. **Now two angles were sitting on either side of where Jesus's body had been laid and resurrected from**. What the mercy seat pointed to was fulfilled. God could have mercy on humanity and have restored relationship with us, because of the resurrection of Jesus. Two angels marked the spot just as they had before.

John 20:13 ESV

> (13) They said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping?"** She said to them, "They have taken away **my Lord**, and **I do not know where they have laid Him."**

In her tremendous grief, as she is weeping, **the angels are not even an encouragement. She is desperate to find out where the body of "my Lord" has been taken**. Her language is more personal this time.

John 20:14-15 ESV

> (14) Having said this, she turned around and **saw Jesus standing,** but she did not know that it was Jesus.
> (15) **Jesus said to her**, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

I am amazed at how understated the resurrection is in the gospel of John. Up to this point the empty tomb has had the majority of the attention. The risen savior Jesus Christ is alive, and is standing in the garden talking to Mary. He had conquered the grave!

Acts 2:24 ESV

> (24) God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because **it was not possible for Him to be held by it.**

Death could not hold onto Jesus. The perfect payment for sin had been given through Him. The penalty for sin was perfectly dealt with. He is risen! This is the core issue of the empty grave. There is no hidden dead body, Jesus conquered death and is resurrected!

We have such an amazing savior. **Even the fact that the risen Jesus first reveals Himself to a women testifies to its truthfulness**. This would have been ludicrous to the Jewish culture. The Mishnah is very clear about whose testimonies are valid: (Mishnah *Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:8) "**The following are unfit to give testimony**, as they are considered thieves and robbers: **One who plays with dice** [*kubbiyya*] or other games of chance for money; and those who lend money with interest; **and those who race pigeons** and place wagers on the outcome; […] **This is the principle: Any testimony for which a woman is unfit, these too are unfit.** Although in certain cases a woman's testimony is accepted, e.g., to testify to the death of someone's husband, **in the majority of cases her testimony is not valid."**

Jesus revealing Himself to Mary first shows that this was not a fabricated story but real History. Even the other disciples struggled to listen to Mary.

Luke 24:10-11 ESV

> (10) Now it was **Mary Magdalene** and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles,
> (11) **but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.**

As we have seen Peter and John were willing to listen and took off in a sprint, the others dismissed Mary. **All these details point to the fact that Jesus is risen**. Everything He taught and claimed is confirmed.

John 20:15 ESV

> (15) Jesus said to her, **"Woman, why are you weeping?** Whom are you seeking?" **Supposing Him to be the gardener**, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Mary sees Jesus but does not know it is Him yet. Both the angels and Jesus ask Mary why she is weeping. **This is such a gentle way of pointing out that she does not understand what is happening.** She keeps looking for where the dead body of Jesus is but He is standing there resurrected. Jesus asks such an amazing question, "whom are you seeking?"

John 20:16 ESV

> (16) Jesus said to her, "**Mary**." **She turned** and said to Him in Aramaic, "**Rabboni**!" (which means Teacher).

She had turned in verse 14 to talk to Jesus and apparently is so frantic she has already turned away by the time He says her name. Jesus called her by name and she could see Him. Her response is heartfelt, and personal she calls Him "my Teacher."

John 10:3-4 ESV

> (3) To Him the gatekeeper opens. **The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name** and leads them out.
> (4) When He has brought out all His own, **He goes before them**, and **the sheep follow Him,** for they know His voice.

We have a person intimate savior who wants to call you by name. He specifically knows you. Jesus went before us and defeated death. He was the first one resurrected and made it possible for us to follow Him. Our future is amazing and we have hope and victory because of Him.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 ESV

> (51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
> (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead **will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**
> (53) For this **perishable body must put on the imperishable**, and this mortal body must put on immortality.
> (54) When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: **"Death is swallowed up in victory."**
> (55) "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
> (56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
> (57) **But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus**

> **Christ.**
> (58) **Therefore**, my beloved brothers, **be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**
