

Best News Ever!



SERMON NOTES APRIL 20, 2025

*Easter Sunday at 9 and 11 AM
Scripture: John 20:1-18*

JOHN 20:1-18 (NRSV)

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So 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.' ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb.

⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They 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.' ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' 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.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because 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."' ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

"Jesus' resurrection changes everything...sins forgiven, death defeated, life transformed, and hope secured...God's exclamation point!!!"

I. THE FACT IS...

- A. It was still dark on the first day of the Jewish week (Sunday for us, though not early, the Jewish day began at sundown on Saturday evening) when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb where Jesus' body had been placed.
- B. John's Gospel begins here to account for the evidence surrounding Mary's discovery of the stone removed from the sepulcher.
- C. Mary doesn't enter the tomb but urgently goes to Peter and the "Beloved Disciple" (never named in the Gospel but identified only by his relationship with Jesus) and tells them that Jesus' body has been taken from the tomb.
- D. The evidence mounts as the Beloved Disciple reaches the tomb first, peers in and sees the linen wrappings lying where the body would have been.
- E. Peter arrives and boldly enters the tomb. He also sees the linen wrappings but also notices the cloth that had been on Jesus' head lying rolled up neatly, alone.
- F. The Beloved Disciple also enters and "believes", that indeed the tomb was empty...an empty tomb is no proof of Resurrection!
- G. And with that, the two disciples return home. Mary must have felt caught between the rock that had covered the empty tomb, and the hard-headedness of Peter (the Rock).

II. THE REAL THING!

- A. Mary stood weeping and bent over for a "last look" into the tomb and was surprised by the two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been laid!
- B. Their address to Mary Magdalene, woman, echoes Jesus' own address to his mother earlier in the Gospel account.
- C. Mary's response is the same report she gave to Peter and the Beloved Disciple.
- D. Mary then turns to see Jesus, although she doesn't recognize him, and his question of her is the same as the angels... "Woman, why are you weeping?"
- E. Supposing him to be the gardener, in her grief, she pleads for information about Jesus' body.
- F. It is not until Jesus calls her by name that Mary recognizes Jesus, and exclaims, "Rabbouni", which means teacher, and apparently embraces him, because Jesus' next words are, "Do not hold on to me...I have not yet ascended to the Father...but, go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God."
- G. So, Mary is the first witness to Jesus' resurrection, and becomes the first evangelist as she proclaims to the disciples that, "I have seen the Lord", and tells them what he had said to her, a physical and spiritual body of evidence!

III. EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED!

- A. It is the experience of the risen Christ not the empty tomb that is the conclusive evidence of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus, "ambulo and dicere" walking and talking!!
- B. The cross of Christ sealed the redemption of all things as Jesus paid the price of sin and death for all humankind and is the decisive act of salvation for the author of John's Gospel. The Cross is God's ultimate act of solidarity with God's people in that God would spare no cost, even the life of God's Son, in redeeming God's people.
- C. But the Resurrection of Jesus is God's exclamation point to God's act of salvation in the forgiveness of sins, transforming life, and the promise of everlasting life! And it is the experience of the risen Christ that continues to transform lives today and draw all those who will hear and believe into relationship to God.

Can you imagine Mary's overwhelming joy, spontaneous outpouring of love and genuine surprise in her encounter with the risen Jesus?

How have you experienced the risen Christ, and how has your life been transformed by your encounter?

Do you know, and have you experienced God's love in Christ that offers forgiveness, transforms life, and promises eternal life?

If you are searching for Jesus, hear the invitation to belief and faith as we gather today, and listen as Jesus calls your name, and offers you salvation.