

I have seen the Lord (Psalm 16 & John 20:1-18) Easter Sunday 2017

Please have your Bibles opened up to John chapter 20 - we'll be looking at the first 18 verses. There's the usual outline to take notes if that helps you concentrate.

Let's ask God for His help in the understanding of His Holy Word, this morning.
Let's pray...

Intro/Should we expect the Resurrection?

Let me tell a true story of a little boy called Philip:

Philip was born with Down's syndrome, and he regularly attended a Sunday School class with other eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the other children didn't readily accept Philip with his differences. But because of the caring and creative Sunday School teacher, they began to care more about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully. The Sunday after Easter the teacher brought in some plastic egg containers (like the Kinder Surprises we get here in Australia). The teacher told each child to go outside and find some symbol for new life, and put it in the plastic egg container. Back in the classroom, they would share their new-life symbols, opening the containers one by one in surprise fashion. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the children returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table.

Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether it was a flower, a butterfly, or a leaf, the class would ooh and ahh. Then one egg container was opened, which had nothing inside. Some of the

children shouted out "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment properly."

Young Philip spoke up, "That's mine."

One of the children said: "Philip, you don't ever do things right do you! -There's nothing in there!"

Philip replied "I did so do the assignment properly, I did so do it. It's empty - the tomb was empty!"

Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class.

We'll come back to Philip's story a bit later...

Should we expect the resurrection?

As we just read from our NT Bible reading from John chapter 20

The tomb that Jesus was placed in after His crucifixion on Good Friday - was empty three days later!

Should that be a surprise to the witnesses?

Should that be a surprise to us?

[Powerpoint 1-Surprise?]

Our OT reading from Psalm 16

King David the writer of the Psalm

Seems to have faith in the hope that he won't remain dead in the grave?

In fact King David's psalm is quoted by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2 - as a sign referring to the resurrection of Jesus

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰ **because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.**

Not only that - Jesus Himself said this in John 10:18:

No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and **authority to take it up again**. This command I received from my Father."

When the scribes and Pharisees had asked Jesus for a sign from Him - to prove who He really was - Jesus said this in Matthew 12:39-40:

...no sign will be given ... except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

And Jesus also taught in Mark 8:31:

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

So we pick up the story of Jesus after He has been crucified and placed in the tomb - it's now - in verse 1 of chapter 20 - the first day of the week (our Sunday)

And no-one should be surprised that the tomb is empty.

Jesus has told them after three days He would rise again!

But let's see how the story plays out...

Reactions to the Empty Tomb (vv1-11)

As we look at the events unfold here

It's worth looking at the various reactions of the people involved as they come to the empty tomb

[Powerpoint 2-Reactions]

Mary Magdalene - she went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. The other Gospels say she came with 3 other women - John here focuses only on Mary. It's very early in the morning - and still dark. Why does she come so early?

Well it's fair to say Mary loved Jesus very much - Jesus had called 7 demons out of her (Luke 8:2) and she had been forgiven of her sins and become His follower. Someone who is forgiven much - loves greatly. That was the case with Mary. So as soon as the Sabbath restrictions are passed - she's keen to see her Lord, Jesus. A lesson perhaps for all of us - to be seeking Jesus each day - at the earliest opportunity.

When she arrived she saw the stone rolled away from entrance.

The tombs of the day were usually cut into the side of rocks and cave-like - with a stone rolled down a slope to close the entrance. Therefore tombs were easy to close but difficult to open - requiring a few strong men to do so.

All the same the stone had been removed from the entrance.

Mary's immediate reaction was to run and tell Simon Peter and the other disciple (which is of course John)

Mary's first assumption is that someone has taken the Lord's body - and she says "we" (the other women with her) don't know where it is.

It's a natural assumption that someone has taken the body - because at that time in history there were a lot of grave robbers - and also she had no expectation of Jesus' resurrection.

Her sole purpose is to anoint Jesus' body and say goodbye properly.

When she can't do that - see v11 - she wept!

Mary's reaction is one of grief and sadness at the empty tomb

Then we have **Peter's** reaction to the empty tomb

Even though Peter was outrun by John, who gets to the tomb first

It's the usual bold Peter who goes straight into the tomb first.

And in verse 6 - it says Peter saw the strips of linen there - the Greek word for "saw" here means considered what he saw - this fits in with Luke's version of the events - Luke says - Peter went away wondering to himself what had happened to Jesus?

We should also take note of verse 7 here to -

The Greek in this verse suggest that the neat orderly arrangement of Jesus' grave clothes - the linen wrapped around His body and the linen wrapped around His head - show that this was no grave robbery and that something absolutely unique had happened in that tomb. The Greek words indicate that the linen

wrapped around Jesus was still lying in a circular form (word - like "twirled") - it's like Jesus' body has come out of the wrapped linen - like a sleeve or cocoon and left the linen intact.

So Peter's reaction to the empty tomb is - that he wondered what had happened.

Which brings us to **John's** reaction.

After Peter has gone in to the tomb

Then John does so and see v8 - it says John saw and believed.

The word for "saw" here is a different Greek word - which means he understood or perceived the significance of the empty tomb. It would be like us saying - "now I see what's going on here"

And John believed straight away - that Jesus is risen!

Even though as verse 9 says - even though at this stage none of them understood from Scripture that Jesus had to rise - and that they didn't fully understand it was part of God's plan.

Sometimes faith - requires us to believe - without fully understanding or explaining - that's the nature of faith!

[Powerpoint 3-Reactions Available]

So at the empty tomb - there are 3 reactions:

1. Grief and sorrow - Jesus is dead and gone
2. Not sure what has happened - I need to think about it
3. I believe Jesus is risen - as He said He would

Those 3 reactions are available to us today?

Which one have we taken?

(pause)

Jesus appears to Mary (vv11-18)

Mary's grief and sorrow are short lived

[Powerpoint 4-Jesus appears to Mary]

See v11 - Mary has returned to the empty tomb

She saw 2 angels - but they don't really faze her - she's too upset

When she turned around in v14 - she saw the risen Jesus

But she didn't at first recognize Him - she thinks He is the gardener (v15)

We can deduce from this - that Jesus' resurrected appearance is somewhat different to his earthly appearance

The two men who met the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) had a similar problem initially - until Jesus broke bread with them!

But all Jesus has to do is say one word to her in v16

"Mary"

And she recognized Him

Remember Jesus said in John 10:27

My sheep listen to my voice;

Never was one word uttered with such charged emotion: "Mary"

Mary is ecstatic she cries out "Rabboni" (Aramaic=Teacher)

And we deduce that she actually grabbed hold of Jesus - and she's not letting him go again!

Because Jesus says in v17

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

What does Jesus mean by 'Do not hold on to me for I have not ascended to the Father'?

Don Carson paraphrases it this way and I reckon this is a pretty good paraphrase: Stop touching me Mary (or stop holding on to me) for (gar) I have not yet ascended to my Father - i.e. I am not yet in the ascended state, so you do not need to hang on to me as if I was about to disappear permanently. This is a time for joy and sharing the good news - not for clutching me as if I was some jealously guarded dream come true. Stop clinging to me, but instead go and tell my disciples that I am in the process of ascending to my Father and your Father.

Once Mary realizes Jesus is not going anywhere just yet

She is able to go and share the news with the disciples that she has seen the risen Lord Jesus

So the fact that Jesus makes a woman the first witness of His resurrection is significant. The law courts of that day would not recognize the testimony of a woman, but Jesus did!

This also argues for the historical truth of John's account of the resurrection. If someone made up the story of Jesus rising from the dead, would they make the

first witness of the resurrection, a woman; when women were commonly and unfairly regarded as unreliable witnesses?

Applications

So what can we take home this morning - from this passage in John chapter 20 - to apply to our lives?

[Powerpoint 5a-App1]

1. **We can trust the account of Jesus' resurrection is the absolute truth** because:
 - a. Jesus said He would rise from the dead - and He also gave the sign of Jonah
 - b. The tomb was empty - no one produced Jesus' body. And it would have been in the best interests of the Jewish leaders that killed Jesus to produce His body - to discredit Jesus' followers. But they couldn't because He is risen. The orderly state of the empty tomb and the twirled linen cloths show this was a remarkable event not the result of grave robbers
 - c. There were many eye witness to the risen Jesus. Only 2 witnesses were needed in a Jewish court (Deut 19:15). John who wrote this Gospel is an eye witness - as is Mary Magdalene - as did all the other disciples and Thomas later in this chapter of John - and the apostle

Paul says the risen Jesus appeared to 500 people (1 Cor 15:6) - over a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3) - that's a lot of eye witnesses

In 1980, former atheist and award-winning investigative journalist Lee Strobel applied his journalistic and legal skills to attempt to disprove his wife Leslie's newfound Christian faith, which caused issues within their marriage. After completing a thorough investigation for almost two years he found the historical evidence for Jesus to be true, and then found his own new faith in Jesus. He wrote the book a 'Case for Christ' - The Movie based on this book is coming out soon! [brochures in the foyer]

[Powerpoint 5b-App2]

2. Jesus' resurrection means we too have the hope of resurrection. Jesus promises in John 11 (when He raised Lazarus) - **I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me, will never die. Do you believe this?** A question we all need to answer! The Apostle Paul was convinced and he was someone who had disbelieved and persecuted Christians. Paul says this - **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins (1 Cor 15:17).** Paul's point is Jesus death must be followed by His resurrection otherwise our faith is a waste of time - and we've got no hope!

[Powerpoint 5b-App3]

3. We must share the Good News of the Risen Jesus - it's not an optional extra - it's our job - our mission -

Remember the story of Philip - the boy with down-syndrome

He died not long afterwards from an infection that most children would have recovered from quite easily. At the funeral his Sunday School classmates marched up to the altar - not with flowers, but with their Sunday school teacher, each child lay an empty egg container on Philip's casket

Philip - was a witness to his classmates and to all who attended his funeral

As was Mary (a women cleansed of 7 demons by Jesus)

As were the disciples. In fact - Jesus after his resurrection and before His ascension - gave them a job to do - to go and make disciples - Matthew 28

So if this job of witnessing about Jesus' resurrection is good enough for young Philip (a down-syndrome boy) - and Mary Magdalene - and the disciples - it seems to me - it's good enough for all of us too!

Conclusion

[Powerpoint 6-Conclusion]

Mary Magdalene said: "I have seen the Lord"

Why was she able to say that?

Because Jesus said: I am the Resurrection and the Life. And then He went ahead and proved it!

So - I'll leave you with the question that Jesus asked at Lazarus' resurrection?

Do you believe Jesus is the Resurrection and the life?

If not - Why not?

If yes - Pass it on!

Let's pray...