

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 20.1-31



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 20.1-31
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Introduction to *John 20.31*

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and now everything has changed.

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1 The Empty Tomb

Read and meditate on John 20.1-10.

It is the morning of the first day of the week, Sunday. We can imagine the sorrow, disappointment, and fear that was dogging the disciples. Then Mary went to the tomb.

¹Now Mary Magdalene came to the place where He was buried, early the first day, while it was dark, and saw the stone had been removed. ²She ran to Peter and the man whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "See, they have taken Jesus from the tomb away somewhere, and we do not know where." ³So then both Peter and the other disciple ran together, ⁴and the other disciple ran ahead of Peter, and came first unto the tomb. ⁵And stooping down, he looked into the tomb, and saw the linen cloths in place; but he did not go in. ⁶Then Peter came and went into the tomb. He also saw the linen cloths, ⁷but Peter also saw the face cloth that had been around His head. ⁸The other disciple, who had run ahead of Peter, also went in then, and when he saw, believed. ⁹For they did not yet then know what the Scriptures said, that from the dead He must arise. ¹⁰Then the disciples went away again unto their homes.

- John 20.1-10

Reflect

1. It is the first day of the week, early in the morning, while it is still dark, the third day (Friday afternoon through Sunday morning) since Jesus was laid in the tomb. The old week is over, the week of sin and violence and death. It's a new week, and indeed, a whole new era. Meditate on Zechariah 3.1-10. What happened during Saturday, the day after the Preparation Day and before the first day of the week? Complete this prayer: *Father, thank You for accepting Jesus' sin-bearing sacrifice, for only thus...*

2. Mary immediately thought that someone had moved Jesus from the tomb. She knew she was at the right tomb, just as Peter and John knew where to come, and as everyone who'd had anything to do with Jesus' death also knew. Why did John think it was important we know that three different people came to the tomb and found it empty? What "explanation" for the empty tomb does this eliminate? *Thank You, Lord Jesus, for rising from the dead on that first day of the week, that first new week of...*

3. John and Peter *ran* to the tomb. Why? What was so urgent about Mary's report, that they felt they needed to *run* to the tomb? What might they have been thinking as they ran? What were they probably *not* thinking (v. 9)? *Lord, let me never hesitate to be identified with You, but let me run to...*

4. John reports the situation in the tomb. What did he and Peter see? Recall that Jesus' body had been wrapped in a hundred pounds of spices and linen cloths. How do you suppose Peter processed what he saw? What about John (v. 8)? What's the difference between their responses? *Lord, increase my faith, day by day, that I may believe more and more, and ...*

5. Summarize all that Mary, Peter, and John knew, or thought they knew, at this point. If they had known the Scriptures better (v. 9), would they have had a better understanding of what they saw? What does this suggest for us with respect to our understanding of God's Word? The tomb, sealed with Roman and Jewish authority, was open. The Roman guard set on the tomb was dispersed (Matt. 27.62-66). The garments of the dead have been thrown off and cast aside. Who's in charge here? What's the message of this new era? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"When these men (I mean Peter and John, the writer of this book, for he gives himself the name of the other disciple) heard this news from the woman's mouth, they ran with all the speed they could and hurried to the sepulcher. They saw the marvel with their own eyes, being in themselves competent to testify to the event, for they were two in number as the Law enjoined. As yet they did not meet Christ risen from the dead, but they infer his resurrection from the bundle of linen clothes, and from that time on they believed that he had burst the bonds of death, as holy Scripture had long ago proclaimed that he would do. When, therefore, they looked at the issues of events in the light of the prophecies that turned out true, their faith was from that time forward rooted on a firm foundation." *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

The resurrection of Jesus is a mystery. We cannot understand all the details of how it happened. But does this mean we can't *believe* in the resurrection? *Why* can we believe? What does it signify? Explain.

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
I have set the LORD always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16.7-11

Psalm 16.7-11 (*All to Christ: Jesus Paid It All*)

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night;
You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right.

Make me know life's way; pleasures fill Your hand;

Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.

But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.

Make me know life's way; pleasures fill Your hand;

Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,

You will come to gather me to my home with You in heav'n.

Make me know life's way; pleasures fill Your hand;

Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

2 Life in the Garden of Death

Read and meditate on John 20.11-16.

Mary's encounter with Jesus outside that garden tomb is fraught with significance, not just for what it meant for Mary, but what it means for the story of redemption.

¹¹Outside the tomb stood Mary, and she wept and cried as she stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹²And then she saw there, in that empty room, two angels, dressed in white and sitting, one where Jesus' head had lain, the other one where Jesus' feet had been. ¹³To her they said, "Why are you weeping, woman?" Mary said, "Because they have removed my Lord, and they have taken Him away, and now I may not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴Now when she had said these words, she turned around to see the Lord there standing, though she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said, "And so, why are you weeping, woman? And whom do you seek?" She thought He was the gardener, who maintained the tombs, and said to Him, "O Sir, if You have carried Him away, then Sir, please tell Me where You laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶Then Jesus, in a still voice, said unto her, "Mary!" Turning, she said to Him, "O Rabboni!" (which would be translated, Teacher).

- John 20.11-16

Reflect

1. We can scarcely overstate the importance of this encounter between Mary and Jesus. John did not interpret this event, but merely reported it as it occurred. But as he did in John 1.1-5, the apostle invites us to think back to the beginning so that we can rightly know the Word of God and understand the significance of His coming. Can you see any similarities between this account and what happened in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3.1-6? Complete this prayer: *Father, nothing happens by chance. You work all things according to the counsel of Your will, and that includes...*

2. Mary, a sinner, came into the garden to a place of death. Eve had come into the garden without sin, but to a place – the tree of good and evil – where death was a possibility. Eve was confronted by an angelic creature, asking a question. Mary met two angels, who asked her a question. What did Eve's ultimate response reveal about the "lord" in her life? And Mary's response? What's going on here? *Lord, Your Word is a seamless tapestry, and all its warp and woof lead to Jesus, so help me to...*

3. With Eve in the garden was her husband, who stood by and watched everything that happened. With Mary in the garden was her Lord – the Husband of His Church – who was watching her as she wept. Eve was not able to recognize the serpent as the devil, and Mary was not able to recognize the gardener as the Lord. Why do you think Mary didn't recognize Jesus? What would it take for her to recognize Him (v. 16)? *Thank You, Lord Jesus, that I can see the glory of God in Your face as I...*

4. The word of Satan's lie occasioned the death (spiritual, and ultimately physical) of Adam and Eve. The Word of Jesus, the living Word, brought a different result. What was the effect of Jesus' one word on Mary? Why did He utter only that word? What should we learn about the power of the Word of God from this one word? *Lord, You have called me by name, and I am Yours, and now all Your Word to me is...*

5. Mary was able to recognize Jesus, but she only referred to Him as "Teacher." What does this indicate about Mary's faith at this point? What does this suggest as a general principle or guideline about how people come to faith? How should this guide us in working with the unbelievers in our Personal Mission Field? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"As a woman, Mary was full of feeling and more inclined to pity. I say this in case you might wonder how it was that Mary wept bitterly at the tomb, while Peter was in no way affected. For 'the disciples,' it says, 'went away to their own home.' But she stood shedding tears. This was because hers was a tender nature, and she as yet did not have an accurate account of the resurrection. They ... saw the linen clothes and believed and then left for their own homes in astonishment. And why didn't they immediately go to Galilee as they were commanded to do before the passion? They waited for the others, perhaps, and besides they were yet at the height of their amazement. These then went their way, but she remained there." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

The drama of redemption's beginning among men harks back to the tragedy of sin's entrance into history. Explain. Why?

Closing Prayer

Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The Lord preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.
Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
For You have delivered my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
I believed, therefore I spoke,
"I am greatly afflicted."
I said in my haste,
"All men *are* liars."

What shall I render to the LORD
For all His benefits toward me?
I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people.

Psalm 116.5-14

Psalm 116.4-14 (*Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

I called to God, "O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!"
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
And dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
And pay my vows most truly.

3 The Apostle Mary

Read and meditate on John 20.17, 18.

The account of Mary's encounter with Jesus concludes, and with rich and redemptive implications.

*¹⁷Jesus said to her,
"Do not cling to Me; do not hold Me, for
I have not as of yet ascended to
My Father. To My brethren I want you
to go, and say to them that I ascend
unto My Father and your Father, and
My God and your God."¹⁸Mary Magdalene
came to the Lord's disciples, to explain
that she had seen the Lord, and to report
what He had said.*

- John 20.17, 18

Reflect

1. What was Mary's response to recognizing Jesus? Why? Would you say that you long to cling to Jesus like this? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, now is the time to cling to You, and so I...*
2. Jesus instructed Mary *not* to cling to Him, not yet. He must first ascend to His Father. Meditate on Psalm 110. What did Jesus' ascension to the Father entail? To what does it lead? How does one cling to Him now? *I cling to You, Lord, by meditating on You, exalted in glory, looking to You in prayer, and...*
3. Jesus sent Mary to the disciples. Mary is, in effect, the first *apostle*, which means *sent one*. Let's think about this. What was Mary sent to tell them? How, based on what we saw in John 14-16, would the disciples have understood this message? Mary would not have been privy to that conversation, so she would have to wait to learn about the significance of Jesus' ascension. All she knew was what Jesus told her, and she carried the message faithfully. Jesus has sent us to the world with a message as well. We may not understand it fully, but we must report it faithfully. How would you summarize our message to the world? *Thank You, Lord, for sending me to the world, so that...*
4. Wait a second: Peter and John were just there at the tomb, as Mary lingered outside. Why didn't Jesus just tell *them* the message He gave to Mary? Why was it important that Mary should be the first to bring the Good News of Christ's ascension to the world? Can you see that Mary is a kind of second Eve? Explain. Eve's disobedience brought sin and death to the world. What did Mary's obedience bring? *Father, help me always to remember that the Word about Jesus is...*
5. Mary fulfilled her mandate, and now mention of her disappears from the record. She is doubtless included among "the women" mentioned in Acts 1.14, but not by name. She was chosen for a high and holy task and calling, but she did not become a celebrity because of it. Is there a lesson in this for us? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

“See how the sin of the human race was removed where it began. In paradise a woman was the cause of death for a man; coming from the sepulcher a woman proclaimed life to men. Mary related the words of the one who restored her to life; Eve had related the words of the serpent who brought death.” *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

Mary Magdalene is a study in the power of redemption and the nature of mission. Explain.

Closing Prayer

But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!
Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious *life* from the power of the dog.
Save Me from the lion’s mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!
You have answered Me.
I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Psalm 22.19-23

Psalm 22.23 (*Darwall: Rejoice, the Lord is King*)

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

4 Apostles All

Read and meditate on John 20.19-21.

We need to keep in mind that whatever Jesus commanded His disciples, or taught them, He commands and teaches us as well (Matt. 28.18-20). Which makes us all apostles, just like Mary and the eleven.

¹⁹That evening, when the doors where shut, and they were all together (for they feared the Jews), then Jesus stood before them suddenly, and said to them, "Peace be with you."²¹When He said this, He let them see His nail-scarred hands and spear-pierced side. Then they were glad to see Him. ²¹He began to say, "Peace be with you. As God the Father sent Me, I am sending you."

- John 20.19-21

Reflect

1. Jesus came through locked and closed doors, and was recognizable as Himself. What does this suggest about His body after the resurrection, and our bodies when we are raised and are like Him? How does the prospect of that strike you? Complete the following prayer: *Lord, I know that we will all be changed, and as I think about what the change entails, I...*
2. What was Jesus' word to the disciples (reiterated twice), as they huddled together in fear of what the Jews might do to them? What was He saying to them by this? How could they possibly know peace when the threat to them was still real? Should we fear what might happen to us in our physical circumstances? Why not? How can living without fear affect the way we live each day? *Thank You, Lord Jesus, that because of You, I do not need to be afraid. Instead I...*
3. The disciples' fear turned to gladness when they fully recognized Jesus. Why did Jesus show them His hands and side? The marks of His suffering continued in His resurrection body. Why? Why did seeing these make the disciples glad? How can we see these marks? Should we try to see them? Explain. *Open the eye of my heart, Lord Jesus, that I may see You in glory, and seeing You...*
4. Reflect on our study to this point of John's gospel. Why did Jesus come to earth? That is, why did the Father send Him? Be as complete in your answer as possible. *Jesus, thank You for coming to earth so that...*
5. Just as Jesus was sent, He has sent us – you. What are the implications of this for your daily life? How should your being an apostle (a *sent one*) affect your relationships, roles, and responsibilities? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“Christ says that he sent the apostles even as the Father had sent him, that they might fully comprehend their mission: to call sinners to repentance and to minister to those who were caught up in evil, whether of body or soul. In all their dealings on this earth, they were not in any way to follow their own will but the will of him who sent them. They were also called to save the world by their teaching, so far as was possible. And in truth we shall find that holy disciples were eager to show the utmost enthusiasm in performing all these things. It is not difficult for people to see this, if they give their attention to the Acts of the Apostles and the words of the holy Paul.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

We are apostles of Jesus Christ, people sent with a mission which continues and extends the mission Jesus was sent to inaugurate during His incarnation. Why do you suppose so many Christians are not consciously and continuously involved in this mission? How can believers help one another be more faithful in it?

Closing Prayer

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.
Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Psalm 25.4-10

Psalm 25.4-10 (*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;
According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

5 Imputed Power

Read and meditate on John 20.22, 23.

Jesus imputed real authority and power to His disciples, and through them, to His Church. We ought not neglect these.

²²And therefore, when He said this, then He breathed on them, and to them said, "Receive the Spirit." ²³And if you forgive the sins of any, then those sins will be forgiven; and if you the sins of any yet retain, then are they yet retained."

- John 20.22, 23

Reflect

1. Meditate on Matthew 28.18 and John 13.3. What was the nature of the authority Jesus had been given? For what was that authority powerful? Complete this prayer: Lord Jesus, all authority is Yours, all power is Yours, I am Yours, and so...

2. In the same breath that Jesus sent His disciples (and us), He did something else as well. What? Can we fulfill our mission without this? Explain. Grant me Your power and Spirit, Lord, so that today...

3. This giving of the Spirit is a kind of "down payment" on the Spirit, Who is Himself a "down payment" of greater presence, promise, and power to come (cf. Eph. 1.14). That is, Jesus breathed the Spirit as a kind of token or foreshadowing of a greater giving of the Spirit to come (Acts 2), just as that giving of the Spirit is a portent of still more to come for all who believe. Reflect on John 14-16. How does the power of the Spirit work in us to help us fulfill the mission for which Christ has sent us? Fill me with Your Spirit today, O Lord, and let me...

4. Jesus assumes that there will be sin among His followers, and that His followers will need to deal with sin. These days we tend not to talk about sin very much, or to deal with it very effectively. We have a kind of "live and let live" or "sin and let sin" attitude about sin. But this is not in line with Jesus' teaching. How, in a church, are sins forgiven? How are they retained? Why does this matter? Let there be no sin in me, Lord, or if there is...

5. Can a local church succeed in its mission without the filling of the Spirit or consistency in dealing with sin? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"[Christ's disciples] were able to receive [the Spirit] on three occasions: before he was glorified by the passion, after he was glorified by the resurrection and after his ascension.... Now the first of these manifests him—the healing of the sick and casting out of evil spirits and so does that breathing on them after the resurrection, which was clearly a divine inspiration. And so too the

present distribution of the fiery tongues. But the first manifested him indistinctly, the second more expressly, this present one more perfectly, since he is no longer present only in energy but ... substantially, associating with us and dwelling in us." Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 AD)

The Church has been given real power and real authority for spiritual life and mission. How can we tell when a local church is wielding that power as the Lord intends?

Closing Prayer

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.

Psalm 33.13-21

Psalm 33.18-22 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

6 Believe!

Read and meditate on John 20.24-31.

Jesus emphasized the importance of believing over seeing. If we believe, we will see; if we insist on seeing, we will hesitate, perhaps even doubt, and thus miss the blessing He intends.

²⁴One of the twelve was not then met with all the others – Thomas, called the Twin. ²⁵And the disciples therefore said to him, “We all have seen the Lord!” He said to them, “Unless I see His hands, and feel in them the nail prints, and can reach my hand within His side, then I will not believe.” ²⁶And then, eight days thereafter, His disciples were again together, inside, and the door was shut, and Jesus stood before them and He said, “Peace to you!” ²⁷Then He showed His hands to Thomas, saying, “Reach your finger here, and see My hands; and put your hand right here, into My side. Now, do not doubt. Instead, believe.” ²⁸Then Thomas answered Him and said, “My Lord, My God!” ²⁹And Jesus said, “Since you have seen Me, you believe in Me. All who believe and have not seen Me, they are blessed.”

³⁰And it is true, that many are the rest of all the signs that Jesus did when He was present with His friends, which cannot be recorded in this book. ³¹But all of these are written here so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the very Son of God, so that believing truly on His Name, you may have life.

- John 20.24-31

Reflect

1. Thomas insisted that he would not believe unless he could see for himself. What was wrong about that? Why is that not a good model for following Jesus? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I know I can't always “see” how everything You say is true, so I...*
2. Jesus condescended to Thomas' lack of faith, but do you get the impression this was an extraordinary measure on Jesus' part? Explain. *Lord, I believe! Help my...*
3. Jesus rebuked Thomas for doubting the report of the other disciples and insisting on “seeing for himself.” Why is it a good thing that He did? Who should expect to know the blessing of Jesus? Of

what does that blessing consist? *My greatest blessing, Lord, is knowing You, and...*

4. An old saw has it that “seeing is believing.” Augustine said, however, “believing is seeing.” What did he mean, and why is he right? *I will see You more clearly, Lord, and know Your will more perfectly, and I will tap into Your power more consistently if I...*

5. John reminds us of the purpose of his book (vv. 30, 31). Summarize his purpose. Does this make the gospel of John a good book to read with an unbelieving friend? Why or why not? How might you approach that challenge? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.’ These words were wonderfully pertinent, and they can be of very great help to us. They demonstrate once again how much he cares for our souls, for he is good, and as Scripture says, ‘He wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.’ Even so, this saying of his may surprise us. As always, Christ had to be patient with Thomas when he said he would not believe and with the other disciples too when they thought they were seeing a ghost. Because of his desire to convince the whole world, he most willingly showed them the marks of the nails and the wound in his side. Because he wanted those who needed such signs as a support for their faith to have no possible reason for doubt, he even took food, although he had no need for it.”
Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)

Why is it so hard for people to live by faith? What does living by faith entail? How can believers help one another to walk by faith, and not by sight?

Closing Prayer

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the humble with salvation.
Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment—
This honor have all His saints.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149.4-9

Psalm 149 (*Toulon: I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*)

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new!
Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!
Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him
Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre!
To be so praised is God's one great desire.
Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace;
Show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight!
Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!
Sing praise and take His Word into your hand;
Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

7 Alive!

Read and meditate on John 20.1-31.

Jesus is alive from the dead. Everything has changed. We are changed. Right?

¹Now Mary Magdalene came to the place where He was buried, early the first day, while it was dark, and saw the stone had been removed. ²She ran to Peter and the man whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "See, they have taken Jesus from the tomb away somewhere, and we do not know where." ³So then both Peter and the other disciple ran together, ⁴and the other disciple ran ahead of Peter, and came first unto the tomb. ⁵And stooping down, he looked into the tomb, and saw the linen cloths in place; but he did not go in. ⁶Then Peter came and went into the tomb. He also saw the linen cloths, ⁷but Peter also saw the face cloth that had been around His head. ⁸The other disciple, who had run ahead of Peter, also went in then, and when he saw, believed. ⁹For they did not yet then know what the Scriptures said, that from the dead He must arise. ¹⁰Then the disciples went away again unto their homes.

¹¹Outside the tomb stood Mary, and she wept and cried as she stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹²And then she saw there, in that empty room, two angles, dressed in white and sitting, one where Jesus' head had lain, the other one where Jesus' feet had been. ¹³To her they said, "Why are you weeping, woman?" Mary said, "Because they have removed my Lord, and they have taken Him away, and now I may not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴Now when she had said these words, she turned around to see the Lord there standing, though she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said, "And so, why are you weeping, woman? And whom do you seek?" She thought He was the gardener, who maintained the tombs, and said to Him, "O Sir, if You have carried Him away, then Sir,

please tell Me where You laid Him, and I will take Him away. ¹⁶Then Jesus, in a still voice, said unto her, "Mary!" Turning, she said to Him, "O Rabboni!" (which would be translated, Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me; do not hold Me, for I have not as of yet ascended to My Father. To My brethren I want you to go, and say to them that I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." ¹⁸Mary Magdalene came to the Lord's disciples, to explain that she had seen the Lord, and to report what He had said.

¹⁹That evening, when the doors where shut, and they were all together (for they feared the Jews), then Jesus stood before them suddenly, and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²¹When He said this, He let them see His nail-scarred hands and spear-pierced side. Then they were glad to see Him. ²¹He began to say, "Peace be with you. As God the Father sent Me, I am sending you." ²²And therefore, when He said this, then He breathed on them, and to them said, "Receive the Spirit. ²³And if you forgive the sins of any, then those sins will be forgiven; and if you the sins of any yet retain, then are they yet retained."

²⁴One of the twelve was not then met with all the others – Thomas, called the Twin. ²⁵And the disciples therefore said to him, "We all have seen the Lord!" He said to them, "Unless I see His hands, and feel in them the nail prints, and can reach my hand within His side, then I will not believe." ²⁶And then, eight days thereafter, His disciples were again together, inside, and the door was shut, and Jesus stood before them and He said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷Then He showed His hands to Thomas, saying, "Reach your finger here, and see My hands; and put your hand right here, into My side. Now, do not doubt. Instead, believe." ²⁸Then Thomas answered Him and said, "My Lord, My God!" ²⁹And Jesus said, "Since you

have seen Me, you believe in Me. All who believe and have not seen Me, they are blessed.”

³⁰And it is true, that many are the rest of all the signs that Jesus did when He was present with His friends, which cannot be recorded in this book. ³¹But all of these are written here so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the very Son of God, so that believing truly on His Name, you may have life.

- John 20.1-31

Reflect

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything. Rather, we should say, His resurrection and ascension *restores* everything, and begins to conform the world to God’s original specs and plans. How can you see that, for example, in Mary Magdalene? What had she been? What did she become? Complete this prayer: *Father, Jesus is making all things new! Make all things new in me, especially today as...*

2. The resurrection changed the disciples as well. When Jesus was arrested, they scattered for their lives. Now that He was alive again, they would scatter again, but with a completely different purpose. Explain. *Lord Jesus, as You were sent, You sent the disciples, and You have sent me to...*

3. The form of human existence is changed by the resurrection of Jesus. What can we say about the nature of Jesus’ bodily existence, as we see Him here in John 20? Paul says we shall all be changed, in an instant; and John says we will be like Him one day (1 Cor. 15.35-53; 1 Jn. 3.1-3). What are you looking forward to, when you enter that state? How does being saved affect the state of your bodily existence here and now (2 Pet. 3.11-14)? *In Jesus, I am a new person! Old things have passed away, Father, and all things are become new. Let me experience more of that newness today as...*

4. Also changed is the role of belief in human life. All people live by faith. Everyone *believes* something, *hopes* for something, *envisions* some form of the good life toward which they strive day by day. But Jesus said that full and abundant life (Jn. 10.10; 14.6) depend not on what we can dream up, but on knowing Him and God the Father (Jn. 17.3). In John 20.29 He made it clear that we must *believe* even without *seeing* (cf. 1 Pet. 1.6-9). What does that mean? How would you explain this to someone who asked about your faith (1 Pet. 3.15)? *Give me grace, Father, always to be ready to...*

5. The resurrection of Jesus changed even our understanding of the Scriptures. Prior to the resurrection, many people knew the Old Testament, and many of them knew it quite well. But everything most people knew about the Old Testament changed when Jesus rose from the dead. Explain. How does His resurrection guide us in understanding the New Testament? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“This paragraph indicates, as it were, the end of the book. But afterward, there is still the account of how the Lord manifested himself at the sea of Tiberias and in the draught of fishes where special

reference is made to the mystery of the church and its future character in the final resurrection of the dead. I think, therefore, it is arranged in this way in order to give special prominence to the fact that the end of the book has, as it were, been interposed, and that this ending was meant to be a kind of preface to the narrative that was to follow, in order in some measure to give it a position of greater eminence.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Everything has changed since Jesus rose from the dead. We should be changing too, putting on the new person we are in Jesus Christ, and laying aside the old person we’ve been (Eph. 4.17-24). Jesus must increase in us, even as we decrease daily (Jn. 3.30). What are some ways you see that happening in your life?

Closing Prayer

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD D’s,
And He rules over the nations.
All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.

Psalm 22.23-31

Psalm 22.29-31 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

All the prosp’rous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;
Bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;

The Gospel of John: John 20.1-31

Let them to all nations call, "Bow before His holy face!"
Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus' saving worth!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why did Jesus manifest Himself to His disciples in the *order* He did?
2. As He had done in chapters 14-16, Jesus pointed His disciples to the Holy Spirit yet to come. Why?
3. We must believe without seeing, but not without evidence or good reasons. Explain.
4. How does the resurrection of Jesus guide us in understanding all of Scripture?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 20.1-31? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.