

“The Resurrection”

...we have seen the Lord!

John 20: PART 1

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John 20:1-25 *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the*

other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. 11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. 19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."



To say that we today stand on holy ground is too common, too ordinary, too ignoble. For when a true believer attempts to speak of the resurrection event of Jesus Christ, one's words cry out for a larger, more intense environment—one of smoke and incense, bread and wine, organs and trumpets, familiar voices of greeting and distant shouts of joy, dazzling colors and most of all, *people*...gatherings of elated people, including little boys in bow ties and women with fruit and flowers on their hats. You can't merely stand before an audience and proclaim "Jesus is risen." Such must be actualized. You fulfill it. The church *lives* it. For it is more than an event. More than a historical footnote. It cries out for superhero embellishments. Epic crescendos and whispers of the Oscar. It must be a very part of us.

In our account here in John today, the curtain rises on Mary Magdalene, a follower of Christ, a woman that at one time was possessed by seven demons and had been set free. For her, there would *and could* never be another ruler in her life. I guess on this day she was not ready to move on. She probably never would have been. She was still drawn out to her Lord...to the grave of her “dead” Savior. After all, death was final...she knew that. Everyone knew that. Everyone *knows* that even today. But on that day Mary would experience the supernatural, and nothing would ever be the same again. Because the tomb was empty that morning.

Mary attempted to wrap her mind around this event. Her natural-self tried to reason it out and explain it all away. Not finding Jesus, she went and found Peter and John, telling them someone had stolen the body of Jesus. Once again, I wish I could know what was said, what thoughts ran through their minds at that moment. If you have been in such a place in your life, perhaps you can feel what she felt. Perhaps you have been in such a place where you felt that it was all over, that there had been too many mistakes, too much “water under the bridge” and that all was lost, and then *suddenly*...

This was one of those monumental moments in a person’s life, moments that from then on forever define an individual. Here was Peter and John, two extremely different kinds of men who had been thrown inexplicably into each other’s lives...now bound together in a common love for this “messiah.” Now together side by side, they found themselves running...*just running to the tomb!* There is no conversation recorded, no debate, no reasoning out the situation, just “reckless abandon.” This was not a time for discussion. It was just a time to run *towards* the burning building.

Youth outran the elder Peter, but age had nothing to lose and ran past John who hesitated at the door of the tomb, and Peter entered the tomb first. The world inside the tomb was neat and orderly. Jesus, forever calm and patient, had folded the cloth that had been placed over His head and left it there in the grave. The cloths that had been wrapped around His dead body exactly where they would be had the body simply vanished within them. He would need them no longer. He was alive, and would never see death again.

John...the disciple “that Jesus loved,” entered the tomb along with Peter, and the text says he “believed.” In verses 5, 6, and 8, we find the word “saw” or “see.” First, John came to the tomb and *saw* the linen clothes. The word translated “saw” there, in its original means, “*to look at, to see visibly.*” Then in verse six, Peter ‘saw’ the linen clothes lying inside, and the word used there means “*to study more carefully,*” and from which we get our word “theory.” Then finally, in verse eight, the word translated “saw” is used, from where we get the word “idea”—or “I get it.”

In all matters of life, there is “seeing” and then there is *understanding*. Such would explain clearly why some are able to sit in church week after week and never change and never grow, while others can hear those same messages and their lives are dramatically and continually transformed into a disciple of Christ. The latter...well, they “get it.”

There have been those who can attend a church and proclaim, “I am just not getting fed here.” All the while sitting next to them is a John or a Peter, who “ran to Jesus” and *believed*. Perhaps some do not truly see because the ramifications of *believing* is simply too expensive, too transforming, too *overwhelming*. But ***Peter and John***, and those who share their hearts sitting here today, put everything on the table in their love for Jesus. Yet it is a fact that many of us simply aren’t so willing.

The text shares nothing about Peter and John **running** home. *No*, that was, no doubt, a ‘contemplative’ stroll home. Verse 11 tells us however that Mary was still unable to leave this place...this *event*. Mary was upset, by her own admission, because the text tells us that she believed someone had carried away not the Lord, but her Lord. Some might think that is a minor point, but in reality it makes *all the difference*. Many will acknowledge today that Jesus is indeed the Lord, but will stop short declaring that He is actually ***their*** Lord.

Nothing was going to distract her from her quest that morning. Apparently *not even angels*. I cannot help but think that perhaps that is why she found Him. Jeremiah 29:13 says, “... *you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*” Mary was seeking Jesus with “*all of her heart.*” She had “*been forgiven much, and therefore she loved much.*” (Luke 7:47)

Mary was so determined. She believed that if these guys she was speaking to were to just hand the body of Jesus over to her, she would carry Him out of there. I wonder if we can grasp that kind of loving determination? Suddenly, Mary recognized the voice of Jesus when He spoke.

Mary's desire for Christ was not passive. It was intense. So when Jesus spoke, she knew it was Him. Through all the voices out there today, our passion to hear from Him must be greater than all the noise. We must love Him above all things and all others. Lu 10:27 *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind..."*

Jesus instructed Mary to now *"go to my brethren..."* Not my *servants* or *slaves*, not even *followers* or *disciples*, but **BRETHREN**. This Jesus is our God, our Lord, our Savior and Redeemer. But this Jesus is now something more. He is our friend. John 15:15 *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."*

It's been said that love shows the true character of a man. It is manifested according to the object which he values more than anything else. For as is the love, so is the man. According to his love, so might you confidently designate the man. If he is a lover of honor, he is an ambitious man; a lover of pleasure, a sensual man; and if he chiefly loves the world, he is a covetous man. If a man loves righteousness, he is a spiritual man; if the things above, a heavenly-minded man; and if he loves Christ with a pre-eminent love above all else, he is a sincere man, a Christian a man, a *disciple*.

If Christ truly has our love, He has our all. Christ never has what He deserves from us, until He has our sincere and highest love. True Christ love withholds nothing. If we truly love Him, He will have our time, our service, the use of all our resources, gifts, and graces. He will have our possessions, our freedom, and our very daily lives.

In the same way, as God loves any of us, He will withhold nothing from us that is good for us. He did not even hold back the sacrifice of His only Son (Rom.8:32). When Christ loves us, He gives us everything we need: His character to justify us, His Spirit to sanctify us, His grace to carry us, and His glory to crown us. Therefore, when any of us loves Christ sincerely, we lay everything down at His feet and give up all to be at His command and service: *"And they have defeated him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die."* (Rev 12:11)

The 23rd Psalm tells us, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures," or, as the New Living Translation put it: "He lets me rest in green meadows." He "makes me to lie down." But he does not compel, he does not *force* me. That is not the Lord's way. If He *forced* me to lie down, there would be no pleasure, no joy in it. When a sheep is forced to lie down, it is in fear of what is going to happen to it. So the Lord does not force me. He *leads* me in the pastures of tender grass, and I eat until I am satisfied. Being satisfied with His blessing, I lie down, content. When a sheep is hungry, it will not lie down in the pasture, it desires to eat. But when it has eaten its fill, it lies down and rests and is satisfied. Even when there are many enemies about, "He makes me to lie down." I am in quietness. My heart is not afraid. This is because the Shepherd stands between me and all of life's wolves.

Certainly over the years of ministering, it has become clear to me that no pastor, no church or organization, no amount of coercion or prodding will motivate a person to truly live out their life for Christ. Nothing except a passion for Him, a 'love that compels us,' will ever do the job. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says *"For the love of Christ compels us, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."*

No earthly one can truly make us "lie down" in the green pastures of peace that Christ presents us with. We can fake it for a while, 'pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps' through self-effort, through guilt or peer-pressure, but eventually we will fall, burn out, quit.

There is a story is told of a poor woman from the slums of London was invited to go with a group of people for a holiday at the ocean. She had never seen the ocean before, and when she saw it, she burst into tears. Those around her thought it was strange that she should cry when such a lovely holiday had been given her. "Why in the world are you crying?" they asked. Pointing to the ocean she answered, "This is the only thing I have ever seen that there was enough of." God has oceans of love, but so many of us fail to truly grasp such a truth. There IS enough...

With all the events of the previous days swirling around in their minds, the apostles did what they knew to do: **they gathered together**. They were the first “Christian Community.” They knew they could lean upon each other in a time of crisis. So they gathered with others who shared their passions as well as their pain. Even in their earthly fear, they knew they could count on each other.

Imagine the scene! All the believers gathered together, in soft tones talking about the events that had passed. They, no doubt, were eating together, comforting one another, together working out all the craziness that had transpired. And then suddenly, **He was there with them**. Ahhh, what a moment that must have been! I mean, we find from the text that while He still had a physical body like all of us, He now could simply pass through the walls! I can’t wait to get my new body so I can do some passing through walls.

What was the first thing He says to them? He says **“Peace be to you.”** In a way I guess, that’s what all this has been about. His life, His death, His resurrection, His salvation. It’s all to bring us peace. That is as crucial for us today, as it was for those sitting in that room that day. For we live in a day of seemingly near constant crisis. Wars, civic unrest, political turmoil, economic problems, and natural disasters around the world. Jesus doesn’t say He’ll *remove* us from all those things. But He is bringing us peace in the *midst of it all!* He will walk us *through* the “valley of the shadow of death,” not *around*.

Christ, ever so patient and gracious, shows them His scars. I find it so beautiful and fitting that Jesus had scars. There He was with the community of believers sharing His scars. It was a safe place to do that, I guess. It’s been said that Jesus will have the only body in heaven that is not perfect. He will carry those scars for all of eternity to remind us of the sacrifice that was made to bring us redemption, eternal life, and peace. To remind us of what real love really looks like...what it really costs. Real love, you see, is going to leave some marks.

We have scars here too, don’t we? How many of us have come to Jesus with all the scars left from past battles, some righteous, and others, further back, have war-wounds acquired out there in the world. And we, like our brothers and sisters in the room that day, share our scars with each other and the stories that accompany them. Ah, such is just one of the blessing of Christian Community.

In verse 21 Jesus calls upon them, as He even now calls us, to carry on the work. The peace He brings us is not to make us comfortable in the easy chairs of life with a TV clicker in our hands. Rather “peace amidst the battle.” Please note that! We are “sent” just as Jesus was sent by the Father. We are “sent” just as those believers that day were. We are not called to re-invent the wheel of ministry, but to continue the ministry He lived out.

Once again, this sending wasn’t just for the twelve apostles, but for everyone there. Just as His calling is not aimed just at pastors, evangelists, and maybe elders. Rather it is for everyone who counts themselves a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are those who believe themselves to be Christians, but do not count the gospel as aimed toward them. For them, sadly, there is no such sending and thus, no “going” either.

“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” A book could be written on the premise of this verse. And I guess there was! We could look at all the nuances of how Jesus ministered, how God sent Him out, and reflect upon our own ministries and how we do things individually and as a church. As the Father sent Him out, He likewise sends us out. One thing is for sure: He gave us this peace so we could, so we **would**, “go out....”