

A Reasonable Resurrection

(John 20:1-18)

(preached 10/27/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me to John 20.

We being a new chapter in John's gospel this morning by looking at an old truth.

The truth that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

We are going to call this this...

Easter in October but it will even extend to November next week.

But let's read the first 10 verses of John 20 to get our minds into the text.

John 20:1-10

1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene *came early to the tomb, while it *was still dark, and *saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. 2 So 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 So Peter and

*the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6 And so Simon Peter also *came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he *saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.*

Let us pray.

Spelling bees have come a long way.

When I was in school, there was no nationally televised event.

There was also little information for the speller except a word and maybe a sentence using the word.

We didn't even know what language of origin meant.

We didn't consider alternate pronunciations.

We didn't get a dictionary definition.

We got a word and maybe a sentence and we tried to spell it.

And we went until there was just one person standing unlike this year when there were 8 national co-champions.

However, we did have one hard and fast rule, - once you start to spell a word, you couldn't go back and restart unless you kept the same letters that you had already said.

And our 1st grade teacher made that rule very clear to us over and over.

She would say at the start of every spelling bee, "Remember class, once you say a letter, you can't take it back. So be careful or you will be out."

However, kids would forget that rule and try to get around it at times, but Mrs. Raiford caught everyone of them..

She was sweet but she was very firm.

And after someone would do it, she would say..

"Once you say a letter, you can't take it back. So be careful or you will be out."

Clearly, there are things in life that have hard and fast rules.

Now spelling bees rules are fairly insignificant.

And so are a host of other rules in life.

But then there are rules that aren't flexible.

Things that must be adhered to or else you will be out.

Christianity is one things that has some inflexible rules that determine if someone is in or out.

And the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of those things.

You cannot be a Christian if you do not affirm the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

That is an inflexible rule of what it means to be saved.

Romans 10:9

9 [e]that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

That is an inflexible truth of Christianity.

You will not go to heaven when you die if you don't believe in the resurrection of Christ.

That is clear from Scripture.

However in a 2018 poll, only 69% of self professed Christians strongly agree that the bodily resurrection of Jesus actually occurred.

That is certainly a cause for concern since the Bible puts such a strong emphasis on the resurrection of Christ as an essential truth that must be believed if one desires to be saved.

All the gospel writers devote multiple verses to the resurrection.

Paul's letters make the resurrection central to the gospel.

Ultimately, the resurrection is foundational to our faith.

It is essential to salvation in every way.

Without the resurrection, the entire system of Christianity crumbles, and we simply become one of a number of religious systems where the leader dies and is buried.

So we must be clear in our understanding of the resurrection, and more importantly, we must affirm our belief in the resurrection to make sure that we are part of the faith.

The good news is that John is going to devote the final 2 chapters of his gospel to the resurrection and to the actions of a resurrected Christ.

And in those chapters, we are going to see convincing proofs that Jesus was indeed alive after death.

He had risen from the dead because He is God.

And He is alive today and offers that eternal life to all who will repent and believe in Him.

But don't take my word about the proof of the resurrection, take the words of the Lord that begin in verse 1 of John 20..

We will call this first proof..

I. The Rolled Stone (1-2)

As we left off last week, Jesus has been placed in tomb near the cross on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

His body was taken down from the cross by 2 high ranking Jews, Joseph of Arithmethea and Nicodemus.

Both of these men held prominent positions in Judaism, but both had come to believe in Jesus.

Now they were secret disciples of Jesus at first, but his unfair trial and unjust death has brought them out of the shadows.

And last week, they did the unthinkable, they touched a dead body and prepared it for burial.

It was an incredible act of love and sacrifice.

Neither one of these men's lives would be the same.

Their association with even the dead body of Christ would sever all their ties to Judaism, but these men counted the cost and chose Christ.

And they laid Jesus in a tomb that was close to the place where he was crucified.

Now if you visit Jerusalem today and ask to see the tomb where Jesus was laid, they will take you here to a place called the garden tomb.

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And that is where Jesus was wrapped in linens and covered in spices fit for king and laid to rest on that Friday evening before sundown.

And though John doesn't tell us, Joseph rolled a stone over the entrance of the tomb and departed quickly so that he wouldn't be out on the Sabbath.

Now remember, at sundown on that Friday, everything in Jerusalem came to a stand still.

There would be no activity from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday because it was the Sabbath.

In fact, it was a high Sabbath since the Passover fell on the same day.

So Saturday was quiet day around the tomb where Jesus was laid.

But Saturday came to an end at sundown, and Sunday began.

And that is where we pick up the story in John 20:1.

***Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene
*came early to the tomb, while it *was still dark, and
*saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.***

Once Sabbath was over at sunset on Saturday, the Jews were free to resume regular activities since it was Sunday.

However, the darkness prevented most outdoor activities so most people waited until Sunday sunrise to begin the day.

And as the sun prepared to rise, Mary Magdalene heads to the tomb.

According to Matthew's gospel, she wasn't alone.

Another Mary was with her, but John focuses on Mary Magdalene here.

And why were they coming to the tomb?

They were bring spices to annoint the body of Jesus.

Now we know that Jospheh and Nicodemus had given Jesus a proper burial with spices, but she wouldn't have know that since neither of those men had mad a public profession of Jesus up until they buried him.

So Mary is coming with the other Mary to anoint the body of Jesus.

But when she arrives, she notices that the stone over the entrance to the tomb is moved.

Now you may ask, how did she know Jesus wasn't in the tomb?

Well, it is a pretty safe assumption if you go to the cemetery and see a big pile of dirt beside a grave that something has happened..

And a tomb with an open door would mean pretty much the same thing..

Something isn't right here.

So Mary doesn't investigate any further, she turns around and heads immediately to get Peter and John.

And does she go because she thinks that Jesus has been resurrected?

No.

She is not to proclaim the resurrection as some claim.

She was going to proclaim a crime.

She goes because she thought that someone had taken the body of Jesus and put it somewhere else.

Verse 2

2 So 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.”

This reminds us that the disciples did not anticipate a resurrection.

Even though Jesus told them that He would rise in 3 days, none seemed to remember or believe that.

Mary surely isn't thinking that here.

So she goes and gets Peter and John, but before we see their reaction to the news, let us not forget that a stone rolled away is proof of the resurrection.

Now how did that stone get moved?

Well, John doesn't tell us but Matthew lets us know that angel had descended from heaven to move the stone out of the way.

Now remember, the moved stone is not to let Jesus out but to let the disciples see in.

Jesus could have moved the stone if He needed to, but he didn't.

Instead, God sent an angel to do it.

So we the first proof of the resurrection in a rolled away stone.

But that is not the only proof here..

In verses 3-10, we see the empty linens.

II. The Empty Linens (3-10)

Once Mary shares the news with Peter and John, they take off to the tomb.

Verse 3..

3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

Now John makes it clear that he is faster than Peter.

They both take off running to the tomb but John gets there first.

What difference does that make?

None, just John immortalizing that he outran his friend.

Now what are these men expecting to find?

Some would say that they are excited to get there and see that Jesus is resurrected.

But that isn't the case.

They are running to verify Mary's testimony that Jesus is gone and then figure out how to find his stolen body.

So John arrives first but he does go into the tomb.

He simply looks through the door and notices linen wrappings inside.

As we said last week, these linen wrappings were the common way to prepare a body for burial.

You would wrap a body in a layer of the linens, pour on some spices, wrap another layer, pour more spices.

And in the case of Jesus, there were 100 pounds of spices applied to his dead body.

So you can imagine the amount of lines that were wrapped around him.

And John notices them when he pokes his head into the tomb.

Well Peter finally gets there in verse 6..

6 And so Simon Peter also *came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he *saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

Always being the bold one, Peter enters the tomb and notices the empty linens that John saw but also sees the face cloth that was used on Jesus' head.

And it was in a separate place from the body linens.

Needless to say, this was not making sense to Peter or John.

Verse 8-10...

8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

John comes in and sees what Peter sees, and verse 8 says that he believed.

Well what did he believe?

I think he simply believed the theory of Mary that someone had come and taken the body of Jesus..

He clearly didn't believe in the resurrection because verse 9 says that neither understood the Scriptures that Jesus would rise from the dead..

In addition to that, verse 10 says that the disciples left the tomb and went back to their own homes.

Look, if Peter or John had thought for a moment that Jesus was resurrected, I don't think they would have went back home.

It would make more sense to stay together and alert the other followers of Jesus about this miracle.

But instead they go home.

Now they might not be believing in the resurrection yet, but we should be.

There's a rolled stone, empty linens, and then in verses 11-13, there is the Resurrected Christ.

III. The Resurrected Christ (11-17)

Look at verse 11..

11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12 and she *saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. 13 And 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.”

After Mary delivers the news to Peter and John, she too must have followed them back to the tomb.

They go in and then leave for their own homes, but she hangs around and weeps.

She then looks through the opening of the tomb, and notices two angels in the tomb.

One where the head of Christ would have been and one at his feet.

They are dressed in white, and ask Mary why she is crying.

Mary answers in a very matter of fact way that she is crying because she doesn't know where the body of her Lord is.

Now the reason for Mary's response is that she probably know that these are angels.

Matthew tells us that they had the appearance of a young man.

However for Mary, this is an incredible Sunday morning.

First to the tomb and notice a large stone moved from the entrance.

She runs to get Peter and John.

She follows them back to the tomb, and they afraid her fears that someone has taken the body of Jesus.

And now she is talking to angels.

But her morning is about to get way more spectacular.

Verse 14..

14 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?" 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.”

As Mary is speaking with the angels, she turns to speak to Christ.

However, she doesn't know it's Jesus.

In her mind, he is dead, and his body is gone.

In fact, the text tells us that she thought Jesus was the gardener.

That makes sense since this is a tomb inside a garden, but this is no gardener.

This is the first appearance of the resurrected Christ, and it is an appearance to the nobody of nobodies.

Mary Magdalene was a woman who was once inhabited by 7 demons.

But now she is given the privilege of being the first to see the resurrected Christ.

Verse 16..

16 Jesus *said to her, “Mary!” She turned and *said to Him in [a]Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).

In an instant, this man speaking to Mary goes from being the gardener in her mind to her Lord, and all it takes is for Him to speak her name.

Mary.

And she recognizes Jesus in an instant.

Now what is her reaction?

Well, she runs over and grabs hold of him.

She is clinging to Him in such a way as to never let Him out of her sight again.

In fact, Jesus has to tell us to let go in verse 17..

17 Jesus *said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’”

Jesus was back for a while but He was not back to stay.

There would be 40 days of appearances and teaching but He had to ascend back to heaven.

So Mary couldn't cling to Him forever.

There was much to be done in 40 days, so she needed to go and alert the other disciples that Jesus was alive and well and free from the grave.

Which lead to an additional proof of the resurrection in verse 18..

We will call this..

IV. The Eyewitness Testimony (18)

Verse 18..

18 Mary Magdalene *came, announcing to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and that He had said these things to her.

This is one simple verse but it reveals one incredible proof of the resurrection.

And that proof is the eyewitness testimony of those who saw the resurrected Christ.

Over the next 40 days, Jesus is going to appear to some other women on this same day.

He is going to appear to men walking on the road to Emmaus.

He is going to appear to the group of disciples without Thomas present and then with Thomas present.

He is going to appear on the shore of the sea of Galilee to the disciples.

He is going to appear to 500 people in Galilee.

And then he will spend many day teaching the disciples about the kingdom before making his final resurrected appearance on the Mount of Olives before ascending to heaven.

There are going to be multiple witnesses to the resurrected Christ and and will give testimony of Jesus rising from the dead.

Now understand, for many of them, that testimony will lead to their own death.

So if they were making the resurrection up, it would seem very odd to die for a lie.

The reality is this.

The resurrection occurred because they were many people who witnessed it and testified of its authenticity.

Mary Magdalene is the first to see Jesus and the first to serve as an eyewitness to the resurrection.

And today, we base our faith on their testimonies and we offer own testimony of the resurrection by putting our eternal destinies in it.

Conclusion

#1 - Sunday are something special.

It is no accident that we are gathered here on a Sunday.

On the first day of the week, Jesus rose from the dead.

And on the first day of the week, the church of Jesus gathers together.

The Jews made Saturday special because God rested from his work of creation on Saturday.

The church makes Sunday special because Christ rose from the dead after finishing his work on the cross.

Sunday are not a habit for us church.

They are a constant reminder of the resurrection of Christ.

This is the Lord's day in every way, and no matter what you do on Sundays, every Sunday is a special day.

#2 - Resurrection proofs are something helpful.

As we see the moved stone, and the removed linens, and the empty tomb, we are reminded that God has given evidence of the resurrection in numerous ways.

The testimonies of the eyewitness, the appearances of Christ all serve as proof of the resurrection.

But those proofs are there to bolster the faith of believers.

We are people of blind faith.

Evidence for God exists.

Evidence for Christ exists.

Evidence for the cross exists.

And evidence for the resurrection exists.

And these proofs are helpful to those of us who believe.

But I want to remind you that proofs alone will never convince the unbelieving heart.

And that leads to the final thought for the day.

#3 - Salvation is something supernatural.

I can lead the unbeliever to living water but I can't make him drink it.

In the same way, these proofs of the resurrection can lead people to Christ but only Christ can provide the faith to believe.

Look, if are here this morning and see the compelling proofs of the resurrection and see the need to be saved, call upon the Lord.

Ask Him for the faith to believe in Christ as the Son of God.

Ask Him for the faith to believe that Christ died in your place as your substitute to provide forgiveness of your sins.

Ask Him for the faith to believe that the resurrection of Christ was a real event that verified Who Jesus is and what He had accomplished in his death.

All the proof of God in the world will not awaken a dead heart, but God can awaken the dead heart.

So call upon Him today.

Let us pray.