

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 23RD, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

EMPTY (JOHN 20:1-10) THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

The resurrection of Jesus changed everything, including when Jesus' followers would choose to gather. With His death and resurrection, Jesus secured the new covenant for us and fulfilled everything that the old covenant was pointing to.

- Every day is the Lord's Day so the "when" isn't as important as the "why" and "what."

MORE BURIAL WORK

On Friday, Jesus had to quickly be prepared for burial because sundown was coming when the Sabbath would start. Mary and the other women came early Sunday morning to finish the work of Jesus' burial probably because they were unaware of what Joseph and Nicodemus had done.

- These women bravely visited the tomb.

THE POWER OF TESTIMONY

When the women arrived and saw the stone removed and the body gone, Mary went running to tell Peter and John (the disciple Jesus loved), not that Jesus was risen, but that His body was missing. The men believed her and went running to the tomb.

- **We each have stories of God's powerful and beautiful work to tell.**

HUMBLE BRAG

John outran Peter to the tomb and stooped to look in (the entrance would be around 3-4 feet tall). John sees the burial linens and no body. Peter goes in and sees both the burial linens as well as the folded head wrapping.

- While we don't know how Jesus got out of the burial linens, **the details have all the marks of an eyewitness account.**

DID THEY OR DIDN'T THEY?

It's hard to understand what John saw and believed from vs. 8-9. Probably, John believed the body had been removed but didn't yet believe Jesus was resurrected according to the Old Testament scriptures.

- **Knowing the facts about Jesus doesn't equal saving faith. We need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to truly see.**

NO CHANGE YET...

Verse 10 gives more evidence that the disciples didn't believe yet as they left the empty tomb. There's no rejoicing. There's no amazement. John says he and Peter returned to where they were staying with no fanfare.

- **We have to be careful that the work of God in us, through us and around us no longer awakens praise to Him.**

REALLY HIM (JOHN 20:11-18) THE HELP SHE NEEDED

Mary is inconsolable. The body of her Lord is missing. Peter and John were of no help. As she takes another look inside the tomb, God's power comes into clear sight as she sees two angels sitting where Jesus had been laid, one at His head and one at His feet. They ask a crazy question, considering the circumstances, that turns Mary's tears into joy.

"THEY" HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING!

The angels obviously didn't get it. Jesus' body is not just missing, it's been stolen. Of course, she's upset. The facts are all there for Mary to see, now she needs help to really see.

- Our emotions are a gift from God, but not an ultimate gift. Emotions are fickle. **God's presence and His Word help us see things from His perspective with hope.**

THE GREATEST JOY IS JESUS

Perhaps flustered, Mary turns and sees a man who she mistakes as the gardener and who asks her the same question as the angels. We aren't sure why Mary didn't recognize Jesus at first, but when He says her name, she immediately responds with joy!

- In John 10, Jesus says His sheep know His voice. **Do we?**

"DON'T CLING TO ME"

There have been lots of "theories" as to why Jesus told Mary not to keep holding onto Him. The simplest is that in her excitement she grabbed hold of Jesus and wasn't going to let Him go ever again. Jesus says He's not yet ascending to His Father, implying she will see Him again before He ascends.

- Often, the simplest explanation is the best!

WE GET THE FATHER, TOO!

Jesus says several amazing things. He commissions Mary, a woman, to go and tell His disciples that Jesus is risen. He also calls these men who had deserted Him brothers. And while not exactly the same, Jesus says His Father is their Father, too.

- **All eternity will be a joyful awareness of all we've received in Jesus!**

THIS IS OUR STORY

Emboldened from her encounter with Jesus, Mary tells the disciples all that she has seen, heard, and touched. John touches on this in 1 John 1:1-3.

- What a privilege we have to continue in this line of witnesses to who Jesus is and all He has done for us. **Let's never take this joyful task for granted.**

SENT (JOHN 20:19-23) WE NEED HIS PEACE

That same Sunday, Jesus appears to the disciples. They were in a locked room fearing they might be next to be arrested and killed. We don't know how Jesus got into the locked room. In John 16:33, Jesus said they would have suffering in this world, but His Word would give them peace, so He opens with peace.

- **Jesus speaks peace to us still today.**

MORE EVIDENCE

Jesus showed His disciples the scars on His hands from the nails and the scar on His side from the spear. The questions concerning the empty tomb were answered. **Jesus is risen from the dead!** And notice their response, they rejoiced.

- **Jesus is our Lord who turns everything around for our good and His glory.**

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Each of the four Gospels has a commissioning of the disciples from Jesus. We see this here in vs. 21. They are "sent ones" by Jesus to people who need to know the good news of Jesus. And He breathes on them the Holy Spirit, probably a foreshadowing of what will happen at Pentecost.

- **We have the Spirit's presence & power.**

THE WORK

If only God can forgive sins, how can Jesus say that the disciples can forgive sins or not? The disciples were to go and proclaim how sins can be forgiven, through repentance and faith in the completed work of Jesus. For those who believe, the church can joyfully say their sins are forgiven. For those who reject the gospel, their sins are retained.

FOR US (JOHN 20:24-31) LET'S GIVE THOMAS, THE TWIN, A BREAK

Peter isn't known as "Peter the Denier," but Thomas is known as "Doubting Thomas." We don't know why Thomas wasn't there nor why he didn't believe the disciples' testimony seemingly thinking they had seen a ghost, if anything.

- For the skeptics among us, Thomas is a reminder of God's patience and kindness.

DOUBTERS DON'T WORRY JESUS

A week later Thomas' doubts are completely removed as he sees Jesus for himself. Notice that Jesus isn't afraid of Thomas' questions but invites him to come and touch Him. Thomas responds with the exclamation that all true believers have when they meet Jesus, **"My Lord and my God!"**

- **If we really seek Jesus, we can find Him.**

NO DISADVANTAGE FOR US

There are many who claim they would believe if they could see Jesus for themselves. Both Jesus and John confirm that seeing Him is no advantage. People saw Jesus and rejected Him. And now for 2000 years people have read these words from John and, by faith, have believed that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of the world.

HOW WELL DO WE KNOW THE GOSPEL?

- We can't lead people to places we've never been.
- **Reminding ourselves daily about the gospel helps keep it at the forefront of our minds which increases our joy and hope.**
- **Living out the gospel gives credibility when we have opportunities to share it with others.**

WHAT STEALS OUR JOY IN JESUS?

- Do doubts, circumstances, and pressures easily distract us from our faith in Jesus and trust in His Word?
- Are we seeing God come through for us even in the darkest moments of our lives?
- **God hasn't promised He won't give us more than we can handle, but that He would never leave us or forsake us.**

THE RESURRECTION IS FOR EVERYONE!

- For those with little faith, Jesus gives us His Spirit and peace.
- For the skeptic, Jesus gives us evidence that demands a verdict.
- For those far from God, Jesus is the loving Shepherd going to find His sheep.
- **For all who believe, Jesus is our Lord and God who we worship now and forever.**