

John - Part 59 - EASTER Sermon Manuscript - My LORD, My God

Go ahead and turn with me to John chapter 20.

We just came off of Good Friday and what some call Silent Saturday. The disciples of Jesus are in deep anguish because they just saw Jesus, their Lord and friend, beaten, humiliated, and crucified.

At this point, they're broken; emotionally, spiritually... they're at a loss. And according to Jewish death rituals, the only thing they'd be doing for the next week was mourning the death of their friend.

Typically when you'd lose someone like this, friends and family would come from all over to pay their respects and offer their services to you so that you didn't have to worry about the day to day tasks as you mourned.

But Matthew, Mark, Luke and John don't mention this. Instead, they mention that the disciples were staying behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders that put Jesus on the cross.

But Mary Magdalene and the other women disciples were determined to honor Jesus with their Jewish burial rituals. Luke tells us that they had prepared spices and perfumes for the body on Friday. Then they waited until Sunday to anoint the body because they wanted to be obedient during the Sabbath by resting.

So John tells us that early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. She wasn't alone - the other gospels tell us that Mary the mother of James was there, as well as Salome and Joanna, and some others.

These women went under the cover of darkness to anoint the body of Jesus with the spices they had prepared. Here's how John tells it...

John 20:1 - Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

Luke tells us that the women went inside the tomb but didn't see the body. Then suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. But we know these guys weren't men at all, they were angels, messengers of the Lord.

They reminded the women of Jesus' words when He said, "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." The women remembered these words, but they still didn't understand them.

So they ran back and told the men everything that happened. The guys didn't believe the story. The story the women told sounded like nonsense! Even Mary Magdalene didn't seem to believe that the two visitors were angels...

John 20:2 - So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Again, the guys didn't believe the story. But if the body was taken, Peter and John needed to see it for themselves...

John 20:3-4 - So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

John 20:5-6 - He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb.

John 20:7-8 - He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

He believed Mary's story that Jesus had been taken. John tells us that...

John 20:9-10 - (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

I'm guessing Mary and the other women went running back to the tomb with John and Peter, then when the guys left, the women stayed...

John 20:11-13 - Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

John 20:14-16 - At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

John 20:17 - Jesus said, "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.'"

John 20:18 - Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Meanwhile, there were soldiers that were supposed to guard the tomb. But that didn't work out! So Matthew tells us that they went into the city and reported everything that happened to the chief priests. The chief priests then met with the elders and came up with a plan.

They paid the soldiers to give a false report to Pilate. Instead of telling the truth, they were to tell Pilate that the disciples came and stole the body during the night while they were asleep. They went and did what they were paid to do, and that story began circulating among the Jews in Jerusalem.

John 20:19 - On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

Talk about a surprise!

Think about their emotional state at this point...

They went from being traumatized on Friday - remember, not only did Jesus die, but that same weekend, Judas, one of their good friends, betrayed them and then killed himself on Friday morning.

Then Saturday came. It was supposed to be a time of celebration! It was a special Sabbath - the Jews were celebrating two holidays in one day! But for the disciples, it was a day of mourning.

Then on Sunday they found the tomb was empty! They're thinking graverobbers took the body of Jesus. And during all this time, they've been afraid for their lives because what happened to Jesus could easily happen to them if they were recognized as a disciple of Jesus.

At this point, their emotional state couldn't get any worse...

Then, suddenly, Jesus is standing with them! Luke tells us that they thought they were seeing a ghost! Jesus said to them...

Luke 24:38-39 - "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Then John tells us...

John 20:20 - After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were *overjoyed* when they saw the Lord.

As I was putting together this sermon, I wondered if maybe the disciples remembered what Jesus said only a few days ago...

John 16:20, 22 - Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy ... Now is your

time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

This was that moment... the moment Jesus appeared to them behind locked doors, their grief was turned to joy... and no one could take that joy from them!

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John 20:21-23 - Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Then John tells us that not all the disciples were there...

John 20:24-25 - Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "**Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.**"

Thomas was the same guy that said all the way back in John 11 that he was willing to die with Jesus. But now that Jesus has died, Thomas isn't easily convinced that Jesus is back. So, the next words in John really struck me...

John 20:26 - A week later...

A *WEEK!*? Did Jesus appear to them once and then He disappeared for a week? I don't know? I'm thinking probably not since Paul records that well over 500 people were witnesses of the resurrected Jesus.

Still, we do know at least one thing that Jesus was doing that week. It's here in John, but it's not really spelled out for us... it's implied...

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John 20:26 - A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

How did Jesus know Thomas was doubting? Because Jesus was with Thomas when he admitted a week ago, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

That really hit home with me this week. During our Good Friday devotional I talked about the fact that Jesus promised to always be with us. Well, here's a great example of when Jesus is with Thomas, and Thomas didn't even know it. Thomas was feeling doubt, and yet Jesus was right there standing beside him.

That's a great example of when we're going through something difficult, even if it feels like we're alone and doubting any kind of good news... Scripture says we're not alone! Jesus is with us!

And so Thomas sees the nail holes in Jesus' hands, and he says...

John 20:28 - Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

One bible scholar I read said Thomas used words that went beyond what any of the other disciples have ever said about Jesus.¹

Because everyone that heard Thomas... and everyone reading and hearing John's gospel in the first century would have immediately been reminded of the LORD God in the Scriptures. In our English Bibles...

LORD is in all caps in the Old Testament because the word behind it is the Hebrew name of God, Yahweh. And the Hebrew behind the word God is elohim. Elohim is the Hebrew word that describes spiritual beings.

¹ Mounce, Robert H. "[John.](#)" *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition)*. Ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Vol. 10. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. 651.

And so when the writers of Scripture want to be specific, they say Yahweh Elohim - LORD God. And in the same way, Thomas is echoing that Old Testament phrase. He's recognizing Jesus as Yahweh Elohim, the LORD God almighty, maker of heaven and earth!

This was the moment when Thomas finally believed for the right reasons. He wasn't seeing Jesus as merely a potential conquering king. He was seeing Jesus as His Creator. So Jesus responds...

John 20:29 - Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

That last part... blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed... that includes us. But it also included many of John's original audience. And so that's why he writes these next two verses...

John 20:30-31 - Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John was writing to people that were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Their lives were on the line. In the same way that Peter was tested and ended up denying Jesus three times, their loyalty to Jesus was often tested. Their choice was: Will you remain loyal to Jesus, or to Rome?

In their day, the Roman emperor was said to be everyone's savior. But we know that the only true Savior is Jesus.

And like Thomas, when we put our believing loyalty in Jesus as our King that came to save us from our sins, we'll not only be forgiven of our sins, but we'll be blessed as we're adopted into God's forever family.

But I think we can all relate with Thomas and his first reaction of doubt. If we're honest with ourselves, every Christian has doubts. **But doubt is not unbelief.**

Doubts are the result of our own brokenness as we live in a sin saturated world that rejects Jesus. None of us are perfect, therefore it's only natural to have doubts.

But we don't have to stay in those doubts. Personally, whenever I have doubts about Jesus, I find my anchor in His resurrection.

Because it's like Paul says in 1 Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 15:14 - if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

In other words, our entire faith in Jesus hangs on the resurrection. He's our living hope because it's through His power that sin and death are conquered.

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But, maybe we're like Thomas? Maybe we need to see it to believe it?

And that's tough... because we weren't there during the first Easter Sunday. But there were many eye witnesses who were there, and some of them felt it was crucial to write it all down so that there'd be a record of it, so that future generations could trust that Jesus really did rise from the grave.

And so, as John wraps up his gospel, his words are pushing us to make a decision. Do we believe in Jesus?

Are we willing to trust Him, and live in such a way that shows we trust Him? Are we willing to remain loyal to Him and only Him, no matter what comes our way?

Are we willing to look to Jesus and confess, "My Lord, and my God."

If so, God's Word says that we will no longer be slaves to sin. We'll be given the gift of eternal life - an eternal life that starts at the moment of belief. We'll be called God's children, as we'll be officially adopted into His forever family. And we'll have purpose, because as Christians, God has plans for us.

These are all promises of God to those who remain in Him. And so I'd like to end this morning with some encouragement from Peter - one of Jesus' disciples and closest friends.

Listen to these words as if Peter wrote them thinking of you.. Because in reality, these words are true for all followers of Jesus. He says...

1 Peter 1:3-4 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,

1 Peter 1:5-6 - who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

1 Peter 1:7 - These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:8-9 - Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[Blank] If anyone would like prayer this morning, I'll be up here after the worship team plays. But before they come up, I'd just like to encourage all of us to really examine our hearts.

Have you trusted in Jesus as your LORD and God? If not, do that today. Maybe even as the worship team plays, just pray where you are and tell Jesus that you believe. He'll take it from there!

Let's Pray