

4/17/22 - John 20:1-18 - "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

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- [0 : 00] What occurred three days after Jesus Christ was put to death stands alone as the greatest wonder and sign known to mankind or the greatest hoax known to mankind.
- That has duped us all for centuries upon centuries. Greater than Houdini. The apostles suffered greatly due to their testimony of what they witnessed this very day, three days later.
- And the majority of them died for that testimony. Summarized in their testimony is the Apostles' Creed that reads, I believe in Jesus Christ, the Father's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
- He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.
- He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
- [1 : 26] Today we're going to be dropping into ground zero of their very testimony, of which is highlighted in the Apostles' Creed that I just read.
- Part of the Apostles' Creed that I just read. I witnessed testimony, ground zero of what occurred three days after the death, the burial, and the tomb of Jesus Christ.
- We as Steel Valley Church believe wholeheartedly in the absolute, beyond a doubt, resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- Amen? And this belief is not wishful thinking. It's not just doing it because everyone else is doing it. We do it because Scripture has proven to make it so.
- And we believe what we find profoundly in Scripture. And so the passage today will detail that our belief in the resurrection then rests not only in the first person witness from them, but also their witness and testimony as preserved in the written word of God as we have in our hands.
- [2 : 49] You see, various contradictions could come about of saying, Well, it was an empty tomb. Are you sure they didn't eat the wrong mushrooms that morning? Are you sure that they saw what they saw?
- Was there a glare? You can, based on an eyewitness testimony, you can misconstrue and there can be various contradictions. As if the body of Jesus was stolen.
- And so what we see here is not only what do they see, but a sermon titled, Do you hear what I hear?
- And this is a profound first person witness in that day, three days after Jesus was put to death. And so I'm going to break this up into three sections for us this morning as we go through this narrative in the gospel of John.
- And we're going to start with section one. And that is titled, The Dawn of a New Day. And if you are new with us, we welcome you to Steel Valley Church.

[3 : 53] I encourage you to just keep your Bibles open as we go through the verses, verse by verse, and unpack what John has provided to us today.

And so we see the first section with the attributed verses one through three. And it reads, Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Let's pause there. This narrative is laid out in a traditional plot structure.

You have basically rising tension throughout the story, that gripping, rising action as you're trying to see the story resolve and then have the resolution.

[5 : 09] This is a traditional story plot structure. And what is the tension in this story? Where is the body of Jesus Christ?

Where is the body? The rising action. John allows Mary's testimony to serve not as a detailed description of everything that she saw at this point, but more so, John encapsulates for us and details her reaction, her response to what she saw.

This was early morning in verse 1. Look, don't take my word for it. This was the first day of the week.

And Mary came to the tomb early, and it was still dark. The scene begins with the dawn of a new day. If you could imagine just, I want you to feel the text today.

If you could imagine the following day or even the following week after you have just lost someone that you loved so dearly.

[6 : 24] If you have not yet, it will happen. Death is part of this life. And so if you could imagine losing someone that you love so dearly.

It's through those nights that you sleep, but your sorrow and your grief almost serves as an alarm clock that constantly rings throughout the night as you wake up with a racing heart again and again.

Feeling defeated in those moments. Having all those what ifs going through your head. Well, what if I would have told the doctor what I thought I should have told the doctor.

And they would have gave that medicine. And then this could have happened. And that could have happened. And all those what ifs flood in your head in those dark moments in the nights.

Mary is going through that exact experience right now in this passage. And we get detailed that it is early. Waking up on early mornings in Ohio, you hear the birds chirping.

[7 : 39] Before the sun even comes up. The dew is on the ground. And it's like this deep, tranquil peace of silence and nature surrounding you.

And here Mary is walking to the tomb. What did Mary see? The stone on the tomb was rolled away.

Quite a feat. And those what ifs only get stronger the closer she gets to make sure she isn't hallucinating. Until she gets close enough and says, something is wrong.

Someone has robbed the grave. And assuming that there's not even a body in the grave and Jesus is gone. And so she drops her belongings and runs back to awaken the disciples at this early hour.

And she says, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb. And we do not know where they have laid him. And the narrative, according to John's gospel, is off with rising action.

[8 : 50] And a new day it is indeed. The light is breaking through this dark morning. And so we see in the second section, it's a longer chunk.

Here it's from verse 4 to 13. Who robbed the grave? Let's look at this rising action in verse 4 and continuing.

Both of the disciples were running together. But the other outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there but did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head.

Not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. And then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and believed.

[9 : 58] For as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. And then the disciples went back to their homes. The rest of the gospel of John within its context since we've begun this series back in, I don't know, probably two or three years ago.

I highly doubt that John's detailing this foot race between these two disciples. He notates it but I don't believe that that is any part of the emphasis of the plot.

But as his narrative unfolds, it sort of brings about an importance of their arrival for the sake of storytelling.

To not reveal all the details and just splatter on a plate for us to eat. But incrementally compounding details that build off of one another. So in other words, John, he arrives at the tomb first.

He doesn't go in. He was probably younger. He probably outran Peter. Probably more fit. And had the special Michael Jordan shoes on. And he stooped.

[11 : 05] And what did he see? He saw the linen. A couple details. But here comes Peter huffing and puffing along. Probably a little more out of shape. And went into the tomb.

Maybe he couldn't stop. But regardless, that's not the point. What does he see at this point? He sees more. Not only the linen cloth.

But the face cloth. And this face cloth was not only with the other linens just thrown there in the tomb. But they were separate.

And folded. You see, corpses were wrapped in this time period with shrouds of cloth from head to toe.

They were mixed layer by layer with layers of spices and herbs. To mask, obviously, the rotten decay of a body decomposing in a tomb.

[12 : 06] And historical context says that. But in every sense of God's unfolding love story for the redemption of humanity enslaved to sin.

What do these linens truly represent upon Jesus' body? To confine Jesus' body in the linen.

Wouldn't this very tangibly represent man's sin? That has bound his body. And our rebellion, our rejection constantly, day in and day out, hour by hour.

If we want to be honest, minute by minute. If we really want to be honest, second by second. Rejection and rebellion against God. That has bound him in the tomb.

This is remarkable, church. By detailing the face cloth being folded implies that rising from the dead, leaving behind our sin.

[13 : 18] And the very confinement that wrapped his body and held him in place. He rose. He got out of his place.

And Jesus removed the cloth from his face and folded it nicely on a stone slab. Not only that, in every sense of the imagery then, Jesus has shed the garments of man's sin that once had him bound from head to toe.

And his work is completed. Indeed. Don't take my word for it. You have it right here in your hands.

God shed this flesh that once was confined and constrained upon his body and bore in his flesh the penalty for us. And died the death that we deserve.

And now by his accomplishments, we receive the righteousness of God. Not only that. Just as after a good meal, like we just had downstairs.

[14 : 33] And we've had our fill. What do we do as gentlemen and ladies, right? We fold our napkins, put it upon our table. Which indicates we have had our fill.

We are done. It is finished. He has risen. He has risen indeed.

Look at the details that John provides us. But. Something's wrong. Verse 8. This states that while they did see and believe, compounding those details in the narrative, they did not understand the scripture.

In other words, they did not understand this precise fulfillment, even though they saw and believed. The disciples searched the tomb, but they failed to search the scriptures.

And in so doing, they received a seed of faith at this point. The looming question still exists as John is laying it out for us.

[15 : 47] Who robbed the grave? And Mary's investigation continues. But Mary, look with me in verse 11, stood weeping.

Outside the tomb. And as she wept. She stooped to look into the tomb.

And she saw. Two angels in white. Sitting where the body of Jesus had lain.

One at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her. Woman, why are you weeping? And she said to them.

They have taken away my Lord. And I do not know where they have laid him. Again, John details the progressive details to compound the action in this narrative story.

[16 : 53] Peter and John, they're on their way home with a seed of faith. And Mary continues to mourn at the tomb. Angels inquiring, why are you crying?

Mary says, look at what she says. They have taken away my Lord. And I do not know where. Where they have laid him.

Why was Mary weeping, church? Where did they lay him? Her concern and her basis of weeping was because she wanted to be within proximity of Jesus Christ.

Where did they lay him? She wanted to be with the Lord, even if the Lord is found in a corpse. She wants to be in proximity with the Lord.

They have stolen my Lord. I want to be with Jesus. And I may never see him again. But what she saw is a remarkable scene from Old Testament scripture.

[18 : 07] That the other disciples failed to search. The description John gives us should bring us Old Testament scholars, as we all are, right?

Of the Old Testaments. This is the image of the Ark of the Covenant. As Moses was told by the Lord in Exodus 25, verse 19.

Make a cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other ends. Verse 20. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings.

Their faces towards one another. Toward the mercy seat shall the face of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the Ark.

And in the Ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. And verse 22. Guess what? There I will meet with you.

[19 : 11] The Lord tells Moses. And from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the Ark of the Testimony.

I will not only meet with you. I will speak with you. About all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

And Mary looks into the tomb and sees that very image upon the mercy seat of which is the stone slab of where Jesus' lifeless body was laid.

Two angels on each side where atonement for our sin was accomplished. Mary saw this.

And upon seeing this. The last section. We see faith comes by hearing.

[20 : 13] Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing. But she did not know that it was Jesus.

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 to restore that proximity.

Mary turns and hears the exact same words that the angel inquired. Where? Why are you weeping, Mary? And this time coming from Jesus himself. And she had one thing right in this moment in time.

This man who is unrecognizable at this moment did rob the grave. She had that right.

[21 : 20] It was him. She caught the imposter, right? But it seems like she might have been a little bit distracted by the mourning process. Coming to the conclusion of that somebody has robbed the grave.

The rising action is continuing. And she assumes that she's speaking to the gardener. Probably more attention to the empty tomb than the gardener standing there and just pointing to the tomb and pointing to the tomb.

And mistaken she was because this was not the gardener. This was divine. This was divine. Right?

And Jesus said to her, Mary. Mary. And she turned and said to him in Aramaic. Which means teacher.

mary magdalene sees what christians for centuries upon centuries wish that they could just see for a moment in this lifetime the risen lord a moment where it would seem as if time is standing still the stock market doesn't matter anymore whatever's going on between russia and ukraine still matters but at that moment would not matter anymore cnn fox news everything that's going on with whether elon musk is trying to buy twitter or facebook it doesn't matter everything stops in that moment and there is no sorrow any longer to see the risen lord and jesus said to her do not cling to me for i have not yet ascended to the father but go to my brothers and say to them i am ascending to my father and your father to my god and your god mary magdalene went and announced to the disciples i've seen the lord and that he had said these things to her in other words there's there's lots of work to be done mary we are on a time frame here i am ascending to the lord go and tell announce to them i have seen the lord not only that that mary received from jesus christ look at what she saw look what she heard not only did she see the stone rolled away not only did she see the linens laid there on the slab not only did she see the face cloth not only did she see the angels not only did she see this man standing behind her but i have seen the lord the one who will ascend his father and your father to his god and your god and john is making it clear this is a new day and not only a new day this is a new adam not only a new adam but this is a new moises think of day one of creation just as god spoke there to be light and there was light and light penetrated the darkness here on this day now jesus is the light on the first day of the week and the light is breaking through that darkness through the tears through the morning not only that but he's the new adam romans 5 says for as by adam's disobedience the many were made sinners so by jesus christ obedience many may be made righteous this is a new adam he's the new moises just as moises put aside the veil when he ascended to meet god in glory now jesus has put aside his veil folded it nicely upon the mercy seat and will be ascending to return to the glory that once was due to him when he was with god in eternity and like moises think about the linens that jesus christ shed as a representation of our sin that bound him just as moises went to pharaoh saying let my people go jesus christ sheds the linen cloths says let my people go come on church he is risen he has risen indeed and mary magdalene went and announced to the disciples i have seen the lord and that he had said

[26 : 16] these things to her mary concludes her testimony not detailing all that she just saw but also things that she heard an eyewitness testimony is strengthened by words spoken not just describing that which is seen church we're gonna land the plane here this is a truth that has been inscripturated for us believers christians gathered here who are in celebration do not lose grasp of this truth and this is the great wonder of the resurrection but it is equally a warning for us for those who fail to see jesus as the central fulfillment that scripture points to if you don't believe in the resurrection you're not promised that you are going to receive any other revelation other than what is inscripturated and read to you today you can hope and be basked in your pride for like well if jesus really wants to call me to faith he's gonna have to show up just like he did to mary well in the pride that you come to that statement in the same pride you will die in your sin jesus has revealed to us through the testimony of mary it's scripturated for us today a truth that is profound of which goes from this pulpit and it is beckoning all you ears and hearts to hear today believe in this message jesus is alive he is ascended he's seated at the right hand of god as i preach he reigns in lordship and judgment he will come again and when he comes again he will call at the cry of his commands and the graves of those who are dead in christ will rise and those who are alive in christ who are walking in the streets of youngstown talking about elon musk and everything going on in the world and we will also rise and guess what we will be caught up together in heaven when he returns may we all be found in christ today jesus christ has risen he has risen indeed not only do you see what i see but do you hear what i hear what i hear says mary it's an inscripturated truth of which our faith stands firmly upon let's pray so so so so so so so so