

“Seeing Jesus Alive”

Scripture: John 20:1-18

Graphic: life, death, tomb, resurrection

Key Verses: 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”

Theme: Seeing Jesus alive is more than seeing his body. It’s seeing the evidence of what he does in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit...that’s how we know he’s alive.

1) Introduction

- a) Happy Easter! (turn to your neighbor and wish them a Happy Easter).
Easter Sunday is always a joyous time, isn’t it? Uplifts us...makes us feel alive.
- b) The cool thing about Easter is that we get to focus on probably the most intriguing doctrine of our faith: resurrection – Christ is Risen! What was dead is now alive!
- c) But sometimes for me, and maybe for you, the resurrection of Jesus leaves me sort of like those who saw some things when they got to the tomb first that morning, as we’ll read in today’s text from John’s Gospel. You know, Mary went and SAW that Jesus’ body was gone. She was confused. Peter and John went running to the tomb and they SAW the empty tomb and the grave cloths...where is Jesus?
- d) It’s like, we SAW Jesus alive, then we SAW him get crucified (murdered), and now we SEE he’s missing...so what is going on?
- e) And it isn’t until later in chapter 20 of John’s gospel that Mary SEES Jesus, and then the disciples SEE Jesus, in a glorified body.
- f) But is there something that comes BEFORE they actually SAW Jesus for themselves that leads them to begin to think that Jesus is more than dead?
- g) Is there evidence of something AWESOME that happened – evidence that they SAW before they SAW Jesus – that has Jesus written all over it?
- h) Because, for us, seeing Jesus alive is not so much about seeing Him physically standing in our sanctuary. It’s about seeing him alive in us, and in our church, and in the world around us. And the key to seeing Jesus alive is the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

i) Open your Bibles with me to John 20, starting in verse 1. Let's relive this story again this morning...

j) Let's Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 1-2

i) So Mary goes to the tomb really early in the morning...before sunrise...when it's still dark. I'm thinking she's super edgy because walking in the dark is kind of scary right? When I walk to my hunting blind early in the morning, with no lights, I don't know about you, but my senses are super alert and I'm on full tilt.

ii) And the fact that Mary was afraid of being associated with Jesus, who had just been crucified, made it worse for her that morning.

iii) And she gets to tomb and allows her eyes to focus on the scene in front of her. She (look at verse 2), "...came to the tomb and SAW (underline that word SAW) that the stone has been removed..."

iv) How many people, with a show of hands, have ever ASSUMED something that turned out to be FALSE?

v) ASSUMPTIONS are something that we tend to believe (or act upon) based on external factors, OTHER THAN what we can SEE is true.

vi) Mary made some incorrect assumptions the morning she went to the tomb.

vii) She assumed that Jesus was still dead. INCORRECT, we find out. She assumed that there was going to be a way for her to SEE Jesus. BIG STONE. Turns out, that's correct, but she doesn't know that. And after she found that the first two assumptions were different than she thought, she assumed that someone had taken Jesus' body and done something with it.

viii) But something she SAW changed the assumptions with which she came...

ix) And so, instead of going into the dark, scary tomb...alone...with no one else around (can you blame her for not going in?...I'm not going in there,

- man!)...she RAN back to Peter and the others and told them that “they” (whoever “they” is – maybe the Jews...maybe the Romans...maybe grave robbers – we don’t know) “they” have taken Jesus somewhere...
- x) She didn’t actually KNOW that Jesus’ body wasn’t there...she didn’t see an empty tomb, only that the stone was gone. She’s still assuming Jesus is dead...but because she’s SEEN some things in the process that have changed her focus, she is thinking in a new way – albeit still incorrect.
 - xi) Being an authentic and growing disciple of Jesus Christ comes with a willingness to periodically refocus our attention on what Christ is doing in our lives – and in the world around us – today.
 - xii) I’m not saying change what we believe or change the foundations of our faith. But a genuine openness to change the WAY we are thinking and the WAY we live out our faith, for the sake of the kingdom of God, led by the Holy Spirit in us and in the church to guide our sight.
 - xiii) Jesus’ disciples were stuck in a mode of thinking on the day after the crucifixion...HE’S DEAD...and they weren’t seeking Jesus. They were blinded.
 - xiv) But when Mary ran to tell the disciples what she SAW, it was unbelievable. It began to move them from where they were to a new reality. And Peter and John had to run to see for themselves and maybe try to explain it away...
 - xv) Let’s look at verse 3...

b) Read verses 3-10

- i) So Mary tells the disciples that the tomb has been compromised, and the starter’s gun goes off, and Peter and John run to the tomb...
- ii) And when they get there, look at verse 5, John, who got there first “...bent down to LOOK (underline LOOK) in and SAW (underline SAW) the linen wrappings.
- iii) Then Peter gets there, verse 6...went into the tomb, and SAW (underline that) the linens, AND the cloth that had been around Jesus’ head, ROLLED UP in a place by itself.

- iv) These linens and cloths that they SAW, rocked their world! It wasn't the fact that there were linens there in a tomb. It wasn't the fact that they were lying in place – although that's theologically important to John and I'll get back to that.
- v) It's that these linens and cloths that they saw lying there belong to JESUS, THEIR LORD, WHO THEY HAD SEEN CRUCIFIED, DEAD, and BURIED two days prior. These were JESUS' linens...that had been around his DEAD body.
- vi) And the thing they DIDN'T see was JESUS!
- vii) Sometimes, we SEE things that refocus our attention...refute some of our assumptions. Other times, it's what we don't see – what's missing – the changes us.
- viii) Now, the fact that the head cloth was rolled up neatly is John's way of saying that no graverobber did this. Someone stealing a body in haste would not roll up the head cloth neatly...it would be a grab and run! And the fact that the stone was removed from the door wasn't so that Jesus could get OUT, it was so the disciples and Mary could get in to SEE what had happened!
- ix) But notice Peter's reaction...verse 8...he, "...also went in, and he SAW (underline that) and (listen) believed!"
- x) What did he believe? Did he believe Mary? Or the fact that the stone had been rolled away? Or that linens could be folded neatly? (not when I'm folding the laundry it doesn't).
- xi) NO! John saw and believed, at that moment, that the tomb was empty because Jesus had risen from the dead!
- xii) The linens and grave cloths for John symbolized death. Dead Lazarus was wrapped in strips of cloth. Jesus' dead body was wrapped in them.
- xiii) And NOW, here they are! Not around a dead body anymore!
- xiv) John came to the belief that no one took Jesus' body, Jesus left death behind. He might not FULLY understand what that means, but his faith is as complete as faith in the evidence of an empty tomb can be.

- xv) What they have SEEN has begun to reorient them to the reality that Christ has defeated death...somehow, Christ is not dead anymore!
- xvi) But without any body or instructions or plan, they went back home...what to do now?
- xvii) But Mary stays at the tomb...weeping...verse 11

c) Read verses 11-18

- i) Mary finally gets the courage to go into the tomb to SEE for herself!
- ii) In verse 11, she bent over to LOOK (underline that). In verse 12, she SAW two angels in white – wondering why she’s weeping.
- iii) And before the angels could tell her anything about her concern that Jesus was gone, she turned and SAW (verse 14) Jesus standing there – even though she doesn’t know it’s him.
- iv) And not until Jesus speaks her name, “Mary,” does she actually SEE JESUS ALIVE! She’s a sheep and she recognizes the voice of her shepherd! “Teacher,” she says in reply! It’s YOU!
- v) And in that moment, when she has been through this whole devastating week...when she’s seen people betray, arrest, spit on, beat, torture, whip, crucify and bury Jesus, she is overwhelmed with joy and wants to run over and throw her arms around Jesus.
- vi) But Jesus tells her, “Don’t hold onto me yet...I’ve not yet ascended to my Father. But GO to the disciples and tell them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”
- vii) Jesus is saying that His death and resurrection is our one pathway to be as connected to Almighty God as He is. God is Jesus’ Father and OUR Father...God is Jesus’ God and OUR God.
- viii) When we SEE JESUS ALIVE, (listen) we see a brother who has the same Father in heaven...who has the same God...and, whose Spirit is within us when we believe as John did. There’s unity through Jesus Christ!
- ix) Mary told the disciples, “I have seen the LORD!!!!”. Underline that word *seen*, because the whole point for John is that SEEING the evidence

about JESUS being ALIVE is the basis for our faith. This is the GOOD NEWS of Easter...and the true confession of the post-resurrection Christian church!

3) Application

- a) Is that your confession on THIS Easter? Is Jesus alive in YOUR LIFE today? Have you seen Jesus alive?
- b) I'm not talking about seeing Jesus with your own eyes...but with the spiritual eyes that come when we accept the testimony of the ones who were there when Jesus defeated death. And when we accept the witness of the Holy Spirit in OUR lives to validate the truth about who Jesus is.
- c) Because SEEING JESUS ALIVE is not something we can do apart from the vision of the Holy Spirit – the spiritual presence of Christ in us.
- d) Seeing Jesus alive takes faith – grounded in the Holy Spirit.
- e) Because seeing Jesus alive changes things!
- f) Seeing Jesus alive transforms us from sad and confused people, wandering in the darkness, running to see if anything is true TO being confident about who the Triune God is, and trusting in the Lord Jesus.
- g) Seeing Jesus Alive today, by the power of the Holy Spirit turns lives of sin into lives of grace and fruit.
- h) Is that your life?
- i) Jesus suffered and died, and then defeated death so you could experience grace and fruit in your life today! So you could truly see Him.
- j) No matter where you find yourself today in your walk with Christ...we have the opportunity to say, "I have seen the Lord!"
- k) I have a video that tells about the transforming power of the risen Christ in us...
- l) VIDEO

4) Conclusion

- a) Easter is not a metaphor for living a better life or living longer. Easter is not a symbol of something that happened to Jesus.
- b) Easter is God's gift to us for life – God's way of shouting to us that He loves us so much that He sent his only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sin-death and then raise Jesus from the dead to give us hope for this life and the life that extends into eternity with resurrected bodies of our own.
- c) Seeing Jesus alive...by the power of the Holy Spirit...brings hope for the future and life for today!
- d) Jesus IS alive and He wants you to see Him. He wants His Spirit to live in you today...
- e) Alleluia! He is Risen! And so will we be!
- f) Let's pray...