

**JOHN 20:1-18**  
**THE TOMB IS EMPTY!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 20 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

In our last study our focus was really an overview of the events that happened on this resurrection morning. The reason we did that is because the Gospels together paint for us the picture of what took place. Each gives us a little different picture or information about what happened. Not a contradiction between the Gospels, but again, just different information.

It would be like two reporters covering a football game. Each one covering their own team. You would get a different perspective, different information depending on what the reporter wanted to focus on. And that is what we see here in the Gospels.

This morning we are going to look at what John has told us about this day and how important it truly is.

As I have said last time, many focus on the death of Jesus, paying in full the penalty for our sins, which is so important. But that is not the beginning and end of the story. The resurrection of Jesus is also important to us as Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:3-4, **“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”**

Why are both the death and resurrection of Jesus important in our lives as Christians? Let me share this with you from Matthew Henry.

He wrote,

All who believe in Christ have hope in Him; all who believe in Him as Redeemer hope for redemption and salvation by Him; but if there be no resurrection, their hope in Him must be limited to this life. And if all their hopes in Christ lie within the compass of this life, they are in a much worse condition than the rest of humanity, especially at that time and under those conditions in which the apostles wrote, for then they were hated and persecuted by all people.

Preachers and believers therefore have a hard lot if in this life only they have hope in Christ. Better to be anything than a Christian under these terms! It is a gross absurdity in a Christian to admit the supposition of no resurrection or future state. It would leave no hope beyond this world, and would frequently make his condition the worst in the world.

Indeed, the Christian is by his religion crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are tasteless to him in a great degree, and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those which he pants after. How sad is his case indeed, if he must be dead to worldly pleasures and yet never hope for any better!

- Matthew Henry

The wonderful thing here is that Christ has risen from the grave and that is why I have called our study this morning – ***THE TOMB IS EMPTY!***

When Julie and I were in Israel, we went to the garden tomb and there is a sign by the entryway that says, ***“HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE IS RISEN!”***

The funny thing is that Julie and I, as well as everyone who went into that tomb, looked to see if the body of Jesus was there! Of course it wasn't because - ***“HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE IS RISEN!”***

Now what proof do we have that Jesus rose from the grave?

We covered this last time, so I am not going to go over all that again, but let me just share this with you. And here is the reality!

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith is a foolish fantasy.

However, if the resurrection of Christ did occur, it confirms His life, message, and atoning work.

It is the basis of our hope of life beyond the grave.

Christ is alive, and the evidence is overwhelming.

Here are some of the reasons we can be so sure.

1. Jesus predicted His resurrection (Matt. 16:21; Mark 9:9-10; John 2:18-22).
2. The Old Testament prophesied it (Psalm 16:10; compare Acts 2:25-31; 13:33-37).
3. The tomb was empty and the graveclothes vacant. If those who opposed Christ wished to silence His disciples, all they had to do was produce a body, but they could not (John 20:3-9).
4. Many people saw the resurrected Christ. They looked on His face, touched Him, heard His voice, and saw Him eat (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:13-39; John 20:11-29; John 21:1-9; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:3-8).
5. The lives of the disciples were revolutionized. Though they fled and even denied Christ at the time of His arrest, they later feared no one in their proclamation of the risen Christ (Matt. 26:56, 69-75).
6. The resurrection was the central message of the early church. The church grew with an unwavering conviction that Christ had risen and was the Lord of the church (Acts 4:33; 5:30-32; Rom. 5:24).
7. Men and women today testify that the power of the risen Christ has transformed their lives.

We know that Jesus is alive not only because of the historical and biblical evidence but also because He has miraculously touched our lives.

- Kurt E. DeHaan

Now I do understand that there are many out there that have a hard time with this, that Jesus physically rose from the grave!

Thomas Jefferson was a great man but he could not accept the miraculous elements in Scripture. He edited his own special version of the Bible in which all references to the supernatural were deleted.

Jefferson, in editing the Gospels, confined himself solely to the moral teachings of Jesus.

The closing words of Jefferson's Bible are these: ***"There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone at the mouth of the sepulcher and departed."***

Jefferson just decided that miracles are impossible, so the resurrection couldn't have happened. That's the conclusion he came to, refusing to even look at the facts.

That is a sad place to be, with Jesus still dead in the tomb. What that means is our faith is empty, it is foolish to believe something that never happened. If the tomb still contains the body of Jesus, we have no hope!

But we do have hope because as we look at the facts, they are overwhelming and thus, Paul was able to say in I Corinthians 15:20, **"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."**

I truly believe if you look at the evidence for the resurrection, you will see that He has risen.

And as we have seen last time, Dr. Simon Greenleaf of Harvard University, was a very verbal skeptic of Christianity.

He wrote a set of books called ***THE LAWS OF LEGAL EVIDENCE***.

Dr. Greenleaf was challenged by his students to apply these books to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He accepted the offer, and in the process, he became a Christian. His conclusion was ***“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best-established events of history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice.”***

In other words, if you place the resurrection of Jesus on trial, the evidence is overwhelming, He is risen!

Not only that, but many years ago an English trial lawyer and critic of Christianity named Frank Morrison started out to write a book disproving the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but after careful study he was compelled by the evidence to become a Christian. He ended up writing a book in defense of the resurrection entitled, ***Who Moved the Stone?***

The evidence is there for people to believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but you can reject the evidence and believe whatever you want. But if you deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is not because there is no proof of it!

As I have said, I have called this study – ***THE TOMB IS EMPTY!***

And I have broken down the verses we will be looking it into the following main points.

They are,

***WHO MOVED THE STONE – JOHN 20:1***

***PETER AND JOHN RUN TO THE TOMB – JOHN 20:2-10***

***THE MERCY SEAT – JOHN 20:11-12***

***MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE – JOHN 20:13-17***

***GO AND TELL – JOHN 20:18***

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 20, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we look at this resurrection morning and we see that – ***THE TOMB IS EMPTY!***

## **JOHN 20**

### **VERSE 1**

John tells us that very early on that Sunday morning, before the sun had risen, Mary Magdalene, the one whom Jesus delivered from seven demons, came to the tomb.

Now why was Mary and the other women going to the tomb?

I think that the women came to complete the work begun by Joseph and Nicodemus.

What work did they need to finish?

Morris put it like this as he wrote, ***“Probably, in view of the lateness of the hour and the nearness of the sabbath, Nicodemus was not able to use all the spices he had brought in the way intended.”***

Keep in mind that after Jesus died, around 3 pm, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate if they could take the body of Jesus off the cross so that they could give Him a proper burial. And Pilate was okay with that and let them take the body of Jesus off the cross.

But there was a problem because now it was getting late in the day, the sun was about to go down by the time they took the body of Jesus off the cross and brought it to the tomb, and it meant that the high Sabbath was about to begin, and they need to get home.

But before they roll the stone upon the opening of this tomb, we are told, **“And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.”** John 19:39-42.

In other words, what Joseph and Nicodemus did was done as quickly as possible. They wrapped the body of Jesus in these strips of linen with about one hundred pounds of spices for burial, but they were in a hurry and could not do the job properly. So as they finished what they could do, before the sun could set, they rolled the stone over the mouth of the tomb and went home before the High Sabbath could begin, as I have said.

It is after this that the Roman soldiers put the seal on the tomb and stood guard over the tomb so no one could steal the body of Jesus!

And that is why the women were coming to the tomb, to finish what Joseph and Nicodemus started, to properly prepare His body for burial!

And as we can see, Mary Magdalen got to the tomb before the sun came up, she was in a hurry to get there.

And not only Mary Magdalen, but all of the women were worried about this one thing.

What was it they were so worried about?

Mark tells us, **“... ‘who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’”**

Mark 16:3.

Why was this such a big deal? Why were they so worried about who was going to roll that stone away for them?

Because this stone weighed somewhere between 3 and 4 thousand pounds. And it was placed in a channel so it could be rolled more easily but that was not going to be helpful for these women. In fact, there was a slight incline over the opening of the tomb so that the stone would remain in place over the opening of the tomb!

But before they arrived, there was a great earthquake and an angel picked up the stone and moved it to another location. It was not just rolled in the channel for the stone, it was completely placed in another location!

Now you may be thinking, *“Pastor Joe, how do you know that the stone was picked up and moved to another location? Couldn’t it just have been rolled in the channel that was there?”*

The reason I believe it was picked up and moved was because of what John told us. He said that **“... the stone had been taken away from the tomb.”** John 20:1.

And here is the point. John uses the Greek word *AIRO*, (ah'-ee-ro) regarding this stone being moved or *“taken away.”*

And the idea here is that this stone was not rolled away but, in this context, it means *“to pick up and carry.”* No man could do that as this stone weighed some 3 to 4 thousand pounds!

We are told of this in Matthew 28:2-4, **“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.”**



These events not only helped the women by moving the stone, as this angel did. But there was also a great earthquake and I think the combination of both those things, as these Roman guards saw these things, as they felt the earth move under their feet, they exited stage left, they ran for their lives.

And keep this in mind. This stone was not rolled away so Jesus could get out, but to let the women in and not only that, but now the guards were gone so they had no one to give them any trouble for trying to get into the tomb!

Imagine being Mary on this morning. As you get to the tomb there are no guards. The stone is rolled away. And the body is gone as we will see.

And for Mary, she knew that something had happened, but she was not sure what! The tomb is empty, the stone has been picked up and moved to another location.

And thus, the answer to the question – ***WHO MOVED THE STONE*** is simple! It was an angel of the Lord!

As we read on, we will see – ***PETER AND JOHN RUN TO THE TOMB!***

#### VERSES 2-10

Understand what is going through Mary's mind here. She looks in the tomb and as she does, she sees that the body of Jesus is gone. Her conclusion is that someone has stolen the body of Jesus. What other conclusion could you come to!

Out of this she runs to tell the disciples what has happened, and she runs into Peter and John.

As she tells them what has happened, “. . . **‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him’**” they run to the tomb to check this out for themselves. (John 20:2)

I think John was a pretty competitive guy and Peter was probably older than John, according to tradition, and John tells us that he beat Peter to the tomb!

And as John looks in, he sees the grave clothes lying there but there is no body in them anymore. It is as if the body of Jesus just rose out of those grave clothes!

Folks, it is not *“as if”* the body of Jesus rose out of those grave clothes, that is exactly what has happened. The body of Jesus rose up from the grave clothes, they were not as if He throw them off or someone stole the body and through the grave clothes all over the place! It was like an empty shell!

We are also told that John did not go into the tomb, maybe because he did not want to defile himself. So he waits there and here comes Peter and he does not stop. Peter goes right into the tomb to see for himself what has happened!

And he too sees the grave clothes like an empty shell, just lying there! And that would make sense, that they would be like a shell because of the mixture of ointments and aloes and spices that were placed on these linen clothes. You see, as they would dry they would harden. In other words, they would become like a mummy or cocoon.

Barclay puts it like this, *“The whole point of the description is that the grave-clothes did not look as if they had been put off or taken off; they were lying there in their regular folds as if the body of Jesus had simply evaporated out of them.”*

This also tells me that the body of Jesus was not stolen.

How can I be so sure?

Because they would not leave things in order like this, they would get in and get out, but again, they would have to get around the Roman guards, which would not be possible!

So John arrives at the tomb first, as I have said.

And we are told that John looked in and “saw” these things, *BLEPEI* in the Greek, and it speaks of seeing visibly, looking in.

Then Peter came, and he ran in, and he “saw” these things, *THEOREO* is the Greek word, and it speaks of studying carefully. It is the word we get our English word, “*theory*” from. Peter was trying to figure out what happened.

Then John entered the tomb and he “saw” these things, *IDEIN* in the Greek and it basically means “*I get it.*” It is the word we get our English word “*idea*” from. John believed something took place, he believed, maybe not to the extent he did when he saw the risen Lord, but he still believed!

He saw that the only way those linen cloths could be left in that condition is if Jesus just passed through them as He arose from the dead! But what did all that mean I don’t think he fully understood at this point.

So we have seen Mary, John and Peter all looked in and **SAW** the empty tomb, and that there was evidence for His resurrection. And as you look at these three you can see how people look at the resurrection today.

What do I mean by that?

Let me show you.

When Mary got there and looked in, she saw that not only was the stone rolled away but the body of Jesus was gone! The Greek word here is **BLEPO** and it speaks of more of a superficial look, not really understanding what took place. She knew the body was missing but that was all she knew at this point.

How does that apply to people today?

There are those who have heard about the resurrection of Jesus, but it is just a superficial understanding. Maybe they saw a commercial around Easter time or maybe went to VBS when they were young or some other way the information was spoken to them.

And look at where we are today. You talk to people about the resurrection, and they may have heard something about it, but they truly don't know what it means.

Then there is Peter. He ran right into the tomb and looked and saw. The Greek word is **THEOREO**, and he tried to come to some conclusions, but he was also confused.

Think of the people who have studied about the resurrection of Jesus. Maybe they have even written books or papers on the subject, but they just don't get it. They have their theories or ideas on how the tomb could be empty, but they are just plain foolishness!

The truth is before them, they just refuse to believe.

And then there is John, who initially saw the evidence for the resurrection superficially, he did not comprehend it. But then he went in and gave a closer look and came to understand, to believe!

Like I have said, the Greek word for "**saw**" is **IDEIN** and it basically means "**I get it.**"

That is what we are told in John 20:8, "**Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.**"

How many times have we heard the resurrection story before we truly got it. I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and at Easter time I heard about the resurrection of Jesus. But I did not get it until I came to that saving faith!

And, as we will see, Peter and Mary will also come to believe as Jesus comes before them!

At this point Peter and John go back home, nothing more to do here. The body of Jesus is gone and now they are pondering all these things.

But as we will see, Mary remains there at the tomb. And before Mary meets the resurrected Lord, we are going to look at a beautiful picture that is being painted for us.

What is that picture?

What we will see is – ***THE MERCY SEAT!***

#### VERSES 11-12

Notice how John starts out here, “**But Mary.**” You have to love that. The love and devotion she had for the Lord. Peter and John left and here is Mary once again, all alone at this tomb! She had been forgiven much; therefore, she loved much.

Now as Mary looked into the tomb she saw two angels, one was at the head of where Jesus was, and one was where His feet were.

Now what we see here is a picture of the Mercy Seat with an angel on either side of this Mercy Seat.

Let me explain what this is all about by looking back at what this Mercy Seat represented and then I will apply it to what we see here and what this means to us today.

In Exodus we read of the Tabernacle or that portable worship center for the children of Israel. Now I am not going to go through the entire Tabernacle this morning, we will focus on that as we go through the book of Exodus.

What I want to focus on is the Holy of Holies or the place in the Tabernacle where God dwelt.

As you moved from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies you had to enter through the veil that separated man from God.

You see, only the High Priest could come before God and only one day a year, on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur.

In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant or this small rectangular box measuring 3 feet 9 inches long, 2 feet 3 inches wide and 2 feet 3 inches high. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold on the inside and outside. Inside the Ark of the Covenant was the Law or those two tablets of stone that had the Law written by the finger of God.

On top of the Ark was the cover or what is called the Mercy Seat, which measured 2 feet 3 inches long by 2 feet 3 inches wide but there are no dimensions given for its depth!

Why are there no dimensions given for the depth of the Mercy Seat, but we do have how long and wide it was?

Maybe it is because of what we are told in Psalm 103:11, "**For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.**"

Here's the point. The length and the width of the Mercy Seat is the same as the Ark of the Covenant, which tells me there are strict limitations that God has set for us to be saved.

You see, salvation is not based on our good works, on believing this or believing that!

It is solely based upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary and receiving that free gift by faith.

Paul put it like this in Romans 6:23, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the [free] gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

It is a *FREE* gift!

In fact, it can't get any clearer than what Jesus said in John 14:6, **“... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”**

It is like this, as someone has said, *“It is all very well to say ‘there’s a wideness in God’s mercy like the wideness of the sea,’ but it is much better to understand clearly what is signified by the words ‘two cubits and a half shall be the length, thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.’ God’s mercy is, indeed, wide enough to take in every sinner who contritely presents himself at the appointed Mercy-seat, but it extends no further than that. The limits are Divinely established, and are unalterable.”*

In other words, God’s mercy can’t be measured but it can only be obtained through Jesus Christ – it does have limits!

Now, on either side of this Ark were cherubim and in Exodus 25:18-22 we are told, **“And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the**

**mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”**

God dwells above the Mercy Seat between the cherubim.

Now on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, which you can read about in Leviticus chapter 16, the High Priest, after he was ceremonially clean, would enter the Holy of Holies to intercede for the sins of the people. He would enter in wearing his High Priestly robes; the breastplate with the 12 stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel and it was showing that he held the nation close to his heart before God. The ephod also had 12 stones on the shoulders representing the 12 tribes of Israel and it was showing that he carried the nation before God on his shoulders.

As he entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice, he would sprinkle the Mercy Seat with this blood.

In Leviticus 16:14 we are told, **“He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.”**

Also, there were no seats in the Holy of Holies and for that matter in the Holy Place because the work of the priest was never done. The sacrifice of these animals could never take away your sins; only cover them until you sinned again!

Well, there was one seat in the Holy of Holies, and that was the Mercy Seat, not for the priest, but for God!

Thus, God does not meet with us upon the Law, which would condemn us, and we would face His judgment because we can't keep the Law! He meets with us above the Mercy Seat!



Paul makes that point in Galatians 2:16 as he wrote, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”**

So the Law can't save us, it can only point to our sin, that we are not perfect, that the only righteousness that God will accept is perfection!

Again, in Galatians Paul wrote, **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’”** Galatians 3:10-11.

We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus!

So picture what this Mercy Seat and these angels on either side of the Mercy Seat looked like and now compare it with the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed and these angles on either side.

Jesus, as we will see, is our Mercy Seat and on either side of the body of Jesus were these two angels. You see, the sacrifice was made, the blood was sprinkled, and our sins were paid in full by Jesus.

Now you may be thinking I am taking this too far, but let's look at what the Scriptures tell us regarding Jesus being our Mercy Seat!

John makes this point in I John 2:1-2, where he says, **“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”**

Yes, God requires perfection from us, but the reality is, we are not perfect in a practical sense, we do sin.

And because we have been adopted into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, we are perfect in a positional sense.

As the Father looks upon us the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all our sins, we are as white as snow! And when we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, a defense attorney, Jesus Christ!

The Greek word for “**advocate**” is *PARAKLETOS*, which means “*one who speaks . . . in our defense.*”

Now when I think of a defense attorney, I see someone who manipulates the truth to get his client freedom. Obviously not all of them but some do.

But if Jesus did that, He would not be righteous.

Then how does Jesus defend us, how does He refute the accusations that Satan brings against us? (Revelation 12:10).

Because our advocate has become our propitiation or atonement for our sins.

You see, God became sin for us, He paid in full the penalty for our sins, enduring the wrath of God that was due us!

Thus, Jesus does not defend us by manipulating the evidence because we are guilty before God.

What He does do is say that our penalty was paid in full by Him, and He can show the scars to prove it, case closed!

What is interesting to me is when they were translating the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament into Greek, back around 250 B. C., the Greek word they used for Mercy Seat is the same Greek word that John uses for propitiation, ***HILASMOS!***

In other words, on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and poured out the blood upon the Mercy Seat to atone for the sins of the nation, Jesus has become our Mercy Seat and it is His blood that was shed to atone completely for our sins!

The Law was covered by the Mercy Seat and the penalty for sins was covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we can take that to the bank!

Paul tells us in Hebrews 7:25, **“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”**

In regard to this word **“propitiation,”** Alford tells us, *“The word implies that Christ has, as our sin-offering, reconciled God and us by nothing else but by His voluntary death as a sacrifice: has by this averted God’s wrath from us.”*

It is as Peter said in I Peter, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”** I Peter 3:18.

You see, sin is no longer a barrier between God and man, if you receive Jesus as your propitiation for your sins! Yes, sin can hinder our fellowship with God, but our salvation is secure in Him!

Let me sum this up like this.

Where does God meet with us?

The Bible tells us that He meets with us on the Mercy Seat, which covers the Law and as these two angels look down, they don't see the Law, but they see the Mercy Seat covered with the blood of the sacrifice.

You see, the blood was between the Law and God, between the Law and God's judgment!

As I have said, the Law expresses God's righteousness, and it demands the death of its violators!

But, because of the sacrifice, God extends His mercy to us and does not give to us what we deserve!

It is as Clark said: *"Here we learn that God designed to give the most evident displays of both his justice and mercy. Of his justice, in requiring a sacrifice, and absolutely refusing to give the salvation to a lost world in any other way; and of his mercy, in providing THE sacrifice which his justice required."*

As we have seen, Jesus is – ***THE MERCY SEAT!***

What is also interesting is that Mary is carrying on a conversation with angels and she is not moved, she is not comforted, why?

Because only Jesus can fill that void in her heart!

What a great lesson for us to learn from, especially in the days we are living in.

Now, in Proverbs 8:17 we are told, **"I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me."**

Do you think Mary will find the Lord?

You bet she will!

Let's read on and see – ***MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE!***

VERSES 13-17

Here we see these angels ask Mary why she is crying?

And you have to love the response of Mary. She said, “... **‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’** John 20:13.

Look at the love she had for her Lord. All she wanted to do was to properly bury Jesus and now, the One she loved, they have stolen His body, at least that is what she thought at this point.

I think at this point, and this is my opinion, that these two angels began to look beyond Mary. More than likely, bowing down before Him. And Mary, wondering what they were looking at turned and saw this man there. She did not know who He was, she did not recognize that it was Jesus.

Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus?

Some say it was because it was dark outside.

Others say it was because of the tears in her eyes.

Let me throw this out to you, for I tend to believe that it was because Jesus still bears the marks of not only the crucifixion in His resurrection body but also the beatings He took.

You remember in Isaiah 52:14 we are told, “**Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.**”

Or from The Living Bible, it says “**Yet many shall be amazed when they see him-yes, even far-off foreign nations and their kings; they shall stand dumbfounded, speechless in his presence. For they shall see and understand what they had not been told before. They shall see my Servant beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know it was a person standing there. So shall he cleanse many nations.**”

You see, He still bears the marks, the wounds of the crucifixion and the beatings, the wounds in His hands, the spear hole in His side and in Revelation 5:6 we are told “**And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**”

That could be the reason that Mary did not recognize Him. And think about this, the only one who will have a deformity, will be wounded in heaven will be our Lord, for our resurrection bodies will be perfect! For eternity we will have a witness of God’s love before us every time we look at Him!

And you have to love the devotion of Mary here. She just wants to find Jesus and she thinks that this man is the gardener and pleads with him to give the body of Jesus back to her if he has taken it and she will take Him away.

I don’t know how big Mary was, but I am sure Jesus was at least average size and weight. But Mary was willing to carry the body of Jesus, she loved Him that much!

I like the way that Tenney put it. He said, “*Her words reveal her devotion. She never paused to consider how she would carry the corpse of a full-grown man or how she would explain her possession of it.*”

To this, Jesus replied with only one word, “**Mary!**” And it was then that the light went on for Mary and she recognized this was not the gardener, it was Jesus!

Jesus didn’t reveal Himself to Mary by telling her who He was, but by telling her who she was to Him.

As Meyer said, “*Many had called her by that name. She had been wont to hear it many times a day from many lips; but only One had spoken it with that intonation [tone].*”

Yes, her eyes failed her, but her ears could not mistake that voice saying her name.

What do I mean by that? And for that matter, how did she know it was Jesus?

I love this and it is so important for us to understand this because there are many voices out there claiming this and claiming that, but there is One voice we need to listen to and that is the voice of Jesus!

Remember what Jesus said in John chapter 10, “**. . . the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**” John 10:3b-4, 27.

Mary recognized the voice of her shepherd and what does she do when she recognizes that this is Jesus?

Mary gets a death grip on Jesus; she was not going to let go and lose Him again. Once again, we see this tremendous devotion to Jesus she had, and what an example to us.

Now why does Jesus tell her to not grip Him that way?

In fact, Jesus permitted the other women to hold His feet (Matthew 28:9), and He did not forbid them.

So what is going on here?

One commentator said this. He wrote, “*Why didn’t Jesus want Mary to touch Him? Actually, the ancient Greek construction of this phrase ‘means to stop an action already begun rather than to avoid starting it.’ Mary was holding on to Jesus and did not want to let Him go. Jesus was not protesting that Mary should not touch Him lest He be defiled but was admonishing her not to detain Him because He would see her and the disciples again.*”

I think that is the correct way to look at this. Jesus did not tell Mary not to touch Him, but that she is going to have to let Him go. But not to fear, she will see Him again!

Now let me just take a minute to speak about hearing the voice of God, our Shepherd and following Him and knowing when the voices that are speaking are not of God.

How can we know we are hearing from God?

Because what you are hearing is according to the Word of God and the more you know God through His Word the more you will know His voice!

Jesus gave us this warning in Matthew 7:13-20, **“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”**

Jesus is speaking of using discernment, listening to what people are saying and then comparing it with the Word of God.

Make no mistake about it, the broad way has many false prophets making all kinds of noise and leading people to Hell!

But the true people of God will speak forth the Words of God and that is the big difference, and it is easy to discern when you check things out according to the Word of God!



May we know the voice of our Lord and love to hear Him speak to us as we open up His Word!

And not just hear Him, but to follow Him all the days of our life!

So we have seen here that – ***MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE!***

As we read on and finish our study this morning, we will be looking at – ***GO AND TELL!***

### VERSE 18

Mary was to go and do what?

She was to – ***GO AND TELL!***

But what was she to tell them?

***HE IS RISEN!***

Mark gives us some insight into what Mary did. We are told in Mark 16:9-11, “**Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.**”

After Mary has this encounter with the risen Lord, she goes to tell the other men, the disciples of Jesus that she has seen the risen Lord!

You would think that they would have been excited to hear that great news, but not too much. You see, they thought she was crazy. Maybe all that took place over the last few days had been too much for her and now she was seeing things.

And keep in mind that back then women were not trusted too much. Which is interesting because who did Jesus first appear to in His resurrection body?

A woman, Mary Magdalene!

So I guess Jesus did trust her.

But again, keep in mind what the Rabbis taught. They believed ***“it is better that the words of the Law be burned than to be entrusted to a woman.”***

What I want to focus on here is that Mary has seen the risen Lord and after she does, what is her response?

Her response is simple – ***GO AND TELL***

And like I have said, she was going to tell others that the Lord has risen, the grave is empty, come and see!

Here we are some 2,000 years post resurrection, and yet, people still need to hear that good news. That news that Christ has died for our sins. That Christ has risen. And, in a world that is in a mess, He is coming again to return this world to what it was like when He created it!

Think about this. At that time His men were hopeless. All that they poured their lives into was taken away. But Jesus defeated that hopelessness that they had by rising from the grave!

Do you think there is hopelessness in our world today? You bet there is!

We see hopelessness in children, teenagers, young adults, middle aged adults, and older adults as well. What has happened that we are seeing this rise in hopelessness?

I think we have taken the source of hope out of the picture and all that is left is trying to place our hope in something else, and not the Lord.

But listen to this. We are told,

A majority of adults (62%) disagreed with the statement, ***“our children are going to inherit a better world than we did,”*** and 63% disagreed with the statement, ***“I feel our country is on the path to being stronger than ever.”***

More than three-quarters of adults (76%) said that the future of our nation is a significant source of stress in their lives, while 68% said this is the lowest point in our nation’s history that they can remember.

Two in three adults (66%) said the current political climate is a significant source of stress in their lives.

Further, three in five adults (60%) said that the current social divisiveness in the nation causes them stress.

Slightly more than three in five adults (62%) reported that the racial climate in the U.S. is a significant source of stress in their lives.

- <https://bit.ly/41SyzMH>

There is a cure, a remedy for this hopelessness and that is the Lord! Jesus defeated hopelessness because He rose from the grave and thus, we have the assurance that one day we too will rise!

How can we be so sure?

Because Jesus defeated death!

Make no mistake about it, the death rate has remained constant! No one can escape death but the power that death has over us has been defeated by Jesus at the cross of Calvary.

You see, when we die as Christians, we go to be with the Lord. Thus, the sting of death has been removed and just as Jesus rose from the grave, we too will receive resurrection bodies one day!

And Jesus has given us a new life as He rose from the grave. That old life of sin and death has been replaced with the everlasting life that Jesus has given to us! Praise the Lord for that.

Listen to this story of D. L. Moody. We are told,

As a young man, D. L. Moody was called upon suddenly to preach a funeral sermon.

He hunted all through the Four Gospels trying to find one of Christ's funeral sermons, but searched in vain. He found that Christ broke up every funeral He ever attended. Death could not exist where He was. When the dead heard His voice they sprang to life. Jesus said, I am the **resurrection**, and the life (John 11:25).

- Encyclopedia of Illustrations #10514

Remember the sign that is outside the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed for those three days, what it said.

***“HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE IS RISEN!”***

Thus, ***THE TOMB IS EMPTY, WON'T YOU COME AND SEE!***