

Seeing the Resurrected Lord!

John 20:1-18 - NCBC, April 4, 2021

Main Point: **Rejoice in the wonder of Jesus' resurrection.**

- Seek the real significance of the resurrection (1-2)
 - His resurrection is better than it first appears
 - His resurrection is for you personally
- See the clear evidence of the resurrection (3-10)
 - His undisturbed grave clothes
 - His fulfilled promises of Scripture
- Receive the personal hope of the resurrection (11-16)
 - Jesus lives and comes to you
 - Jesus lives and calls your name
- Respond to the spiritual benefits of the resurrection (17-18)
 - His resurrection changes our relationship
 - His resurrection secures our adoption

Opening Announcements:

- **All guests are invited to attend our Newcomer's Breakfast** next Sunday at 9:30a between our morning services. This will be a great way to learn more about our church family and our shared mission together for God's glory in our community.

<<Name above all Names>>



Good morning church! Jesus lives and He reigns as King over everything! He is risen!! Yes, He is risen indeed!!

Jesus is not dead. Jesus is alive and this morning we quiet our hearts to gather around His word. We come to renew our hope in His resurrection. The tomb is empty – and God is worthy of worship from our thankful hearts.

Our Scripture today comes from **chapter 20 of John's gospel**. So please open your Bibles and prepare to read from **John chapter 20** in just a few moments.

I want to add my special welcome to all our guests today. Whether you are online, or in our Extra Precautions Chapel, or here in this room with us, welcome! New Castle Bible Church is a family of imperfect people who partner together in humble dependence upon our Glorious Christ. So if you desire a safe and loving community where you can truly learn about the God who created you, and rescued you, and has given you an everlasting purpose for His glory, come and worship Jesus with us. Personally, I'd love to meet you today, so please come up and introduce yourself after the service. If there's any way we can encourage you with God's love today, we are eager to do so!

Now let's read God's Word together. Typically we stand up for the public reading of Scripture, in order to call attention to the privilege it is for us to hear God's own Words read aloud among us. So please stand now, and follow along as I read from **John chapter 20, verse 1**, in the English Standard Version:

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. 2 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." 3 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. 4 Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know

where they have laid him." 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 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." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 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.' " 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

This is God's Word.

Let's Pray Together.

The Scripture we've read this morning begins and ends with a reference to a woman named Mary from Magdala. She was known as a Magdalene; one who came from the small fishing port on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

But this Mary had a very dark past. **Luke chapter 8** reveals that this Mary had once been tormented by seven demons.¹

¹ Luke 8:3

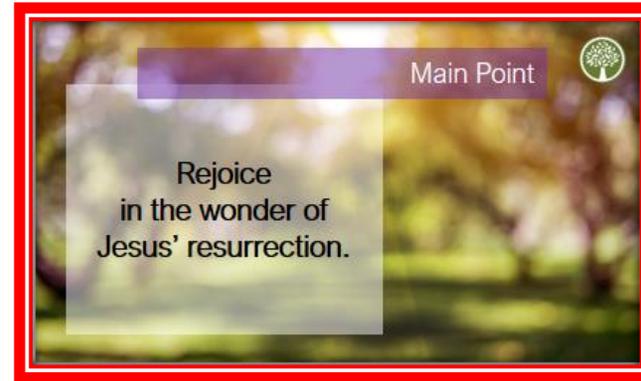
Just pause for a moment and consider what Mary must have been experienced as a tormented prisoner to *seven* demons before she met Jesus.

No doctors could give her relief. No priests could give her relief. She never knew when the demons would cause her to shriek or convulse or rage...and so of course she was considered a lunatic by all of society. The demonic anguish was one of suffocating shame, sin, and squalor. All hope for her had been long ago given up... and she was left mostly alone, as a tormented prisoner of Satan's demons. No joy, no freedom, no remedy, no comfort...only a perpetual agony of seven different kinds ...completely and wholly submerging her life into a pit of darkness which longed for death as the only hope for relief.

Do you know anyone like her? Do you know anyone whose life is controlled by, and enslaved to, darkness? Maybe Mary reminds you of yourself? Do you feel trapped, tormented by demons, enslaved by lies or addictions, or just plain crazy? Maybe you don't even recognize the person you've become...and all hope of living like a "normal" human being seems far out-of-reach for you now.

This Mary understands your darkness. This Mary understands your shame and suffering. And on this Easter morning, it is this Mary who serves as our tour guide in the garden of the empty tomb.

You see, the resurrection of Jesus offers us all reason to hope again. Resurrection light pierces through our darkness today, and gives us reason to,



Rejoice in the wonder of Jesus' resurrection!

After all, this Mary from Magdala had come to know Jesus personally, and all her sins had been forgiven. The demons had been forced to flee, and her soul had been restored by God's grace. In recent years she had faithfully followed Jesus, and rejoiced at the life, hope, and freedom that He miraculously brought to others through His power and grace.

Jesus had completely changed Mary's life! But as we pick up this story in **verse 1**, we discover that Mary has once again been overcome by darkness. Jesus has been ruthlessly murdered, and hastily buried before the Sabbath. All her hopes and dreams for Jesus had been crushed.

And so we meet up with this grief-stricken woman early on Sunday morning so we can also,



Seek the real significance of Jesus' resurrection.

After all, Mary Magdalene didn't yet understand the true significance of the empty tomb, did she?

Her love for her Lord had compelled her to come to the tomb very early...while it was still dark **verse 1** says, and as the light began to dawn the first thing she saw was that the large stone had been thrown off its track, and was now lying in the garden! The tomb was open, and Jesus was no longer there!

So Mary quickly concludes someone had stolen Jesus' body, and in her panic races off to get Peter and John saying,

They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

You see, I want to remind all of us today that,

² Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19



Jesus' resurrection is better than it first appears

At first appearance, Mary made some wrong assumptions about the empty tomb didn't she? She assumed that the Romans, or the Jewish leaders, or perhaps even other grave robbers, had further disturbed and defiled Jesus by moving His body.

Her profound grief caused her to miss the real significance of the empty tomb. In this first scene she entirely missed the clear proof that Jesus indeed had come back to life by the power of God and done exactly what He had said multiple times He was going to do – to rise from the dead after three days in the tomb!²

And so I ask you, what do you make of Jesus' resurrection today? What significance does His resurrection have on you personally today?

After all, Easter is highly commercialized to represent the beginning of spring! In our culture, the empty tomb is just one more symbol of life, just like flowers, or bunnies, or chocolate-covered eggs full of peanut-butter.

For many of us, Easter Sunday could become merely another special holiday, full of traditions like egg hunts, pretty dresses, family photos, large meals, and all attending a church service together.

And of course there's nothing wrong with any of those traditions in and of themselves...as long as we don't miss the real significance of Jesus' resurrection.

The true significance of this historical event is life-changing. Jesus of Nazareth was murdered. He died, and was mummified with over 75 pounds of spices,³ and He was buried. This man claimed to be the Son of God, and repeatedly and publicly demonstrated His Divine power of death, disease, demons, and nature. This Jesus claimed to forgive people's sins. He repeatedly told people how He was going to die, and that God was going to bring Him back to life exactly three days after His death. So the fact that the stone is laying out in the garden, and the tomb is discovered to be empty exactly 3 days after He was buried is extremely significant! We must not miss the point of Jesus' resurrection!

The Apostle Paul says it this way in,



1 Corinthians chapter 15,

If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain... If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Translation: The resurrection of Jesus is what guarantees that Jesus is who He said He was. The resurrection of Jesus is what guarantees that Jesus can do what Jesus said He can do.... Most importantly, the resurrection proves that Jesus can forgive your sins!

Don't miss the significance of the empty tomb! His resurrection from the dead proves that all who believe and follow Jesus can have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life!

You see dear friends,

³ John 19:39



His resurrection is for you personally!

What we are celebrating this morning is far greater than the dawn of spring or some special family holiday!

What we are celebrating is that Jesus rose from the dead to prove that everything He said was true, and everything He did was by the power of God, and that all who believe on Him may have their sins forgiven, and dwell forever with God in eternal life!!

Do you believe this morning that all your sins are forgiven by your Holy God...simply because what Jesus did for you, that you could never deserve?

If this sounds too good to be true, then I invite you to run with Peter and John to the tomb in **verse 3**, and



See the clear evidence of the resurrection.

Peter and John didn't know what to make of Mary's report. So they did what all of us need to do whenever we first hear that Jesus' tomb is empty. We must examine the evidence for ourselves.

And so these grown Jewish men cast off their cultural inhibitions, and both start to run as fast as they can towards the tomb. **Verse 4** tells us that John outran Peter, and so he got to the tomb first, and stooped in to look, but didn't enter the tomb until after Peter arrived huffing and puffing, and barged right into the tomb to check it out for himself.

And once they were both inside the tomb, what evidence did they see?



His **undisturbed grave clothes** were clear evidence that Jesus in fact had risen from the dead.

You see Jesus' dead body would have been wrapped around and around with strips of cloth, mixed with sticky aloes and fragrant spices. And now Peter and John are inside the tomb, and they can see all the linen strips lying there, but there's no body inside them! Jesus' body had miraculously passed through these strips of cloth⁴...leaving them lying there undisturbed, and the face cloth was now off to the side, carefully folded up in a place by itself.

This was not evidence of a grave robbery. The undisturbed grave clothes lying in the tomb, no longer surrounding a body, with all their spices and sticky myrrh still holding the cloths together was clear evidence that Jesus had in fact supernaturally risen from the dead.

No human being could remove oneself from the grave wrappings and leave it like this. No one could possibly remove a dead body from the grave wrappings and leave it so undisturbed. There was only one explanation for

⁴ Just like Jesus' resurrection body passed through locked doors in John
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this evidence, and so **verse 8** says that when John saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth neatly folded off to the side, he believed that Jesus was alive!

How will you respond to this indisputable evidence that Jesus rose from the grave? Will you join with Peter and John and believe that yes, in fact, Jesus was God's Son who died and rose again to bring about our forgiveness for sins?

Look carefully at **verse 9**... why did the disciples believe in the resurrection? They saw the physical evidence, and they believed...but *as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead.*

So let's not miss this second and most credible evidence for Jesus' resurrection.



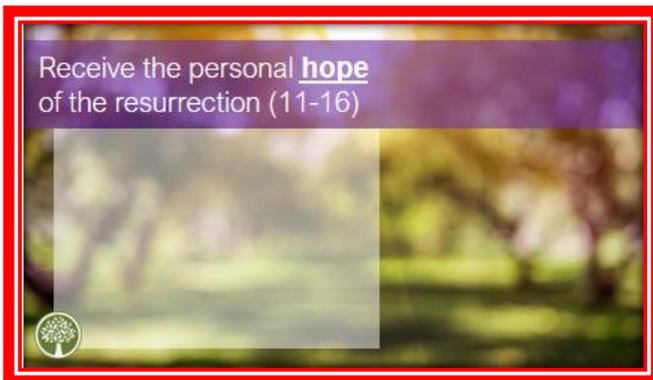
His **fulfilled promises of Scripture** are in fact the strongest evidences of His resurrection.

Peter and John believed that Jesus was alive because of the grave clothes...but now that we are 2,000 years

removed from this historical event, we have instead the stronger witness of the Holy Scriptures... that tell us about the grave clothes, and tell us about all of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to more than 500 people at one time, and tell us about the lies the Romans and the Jews had to spread in order to explain what had happened to the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth.

The resurrection of Jesus happened just the way God Himself had said it would happen, in both the Old Testament⁵ and the New Testament Scriptures.⁶

And so the prophetic word of Scripture gives us a more certain and sure evidence that you and I can believe. Jesus rose from the dead in perfect and complete fulfillment of all the Holy Scriptures. So will you join with the disciples, and now with Mary herself in **verse 11** and,



Receive the personal hope of the resurrection?

You see, in **verse 11**, Mary's grief had still blinded her from seeing the truth of Jesus' resurrection. Peter and John must have already left by the time she returned for

the tomb the second time that morning, and now she was all alone...weeping and wailing loudly, desperate to find the missing body of her Lord.

Mary loved Jesus, and she had come early this morning to anoint His body in one last painful expression of love and tenderness for Jesus. But of course, His body was not there, and so now, in her despondent grief, all she can think about is how to find the body. Where's the body... if I can just find His body, then my grief can get some closure by my giving His body a proper anointing.

We know she's obsessed to find Jesus' body since even the appearance of angels in **verse 12** doesn't seem to awaken her from her grief. So in **verse 13**, the angels ask Mary,

Woman, why are you weeping?

And she responds consistently... I just need to find Jesus' body. If I could find His body, then I'll be happy. But I must have His body. I can't believe someone has taken His body away from me!!

You see, sometimes we are like Mary, aren't we? We get so focused on what has been taken from us, that we can't possibly see what God has instead given to us.

So don't miss the personal hope of Jesus' resurrection, friends. Because of His resurrection,

⁵ Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:10-12; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17

⁶ Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8



Jesus lives and comes to you!

When your life is the darkest, and your pain is the greatest, who draws near to you but Jesus Himself?!

In **verse 14**, Mary turns around and sees Jesus, but she doesn't recognize Him in His resurrected state, and so Jesus gently asks her,

Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?

And she turns away from Jesus in grief, supposing him to be the gardener, and again expresses her obsession with finding the body saying,

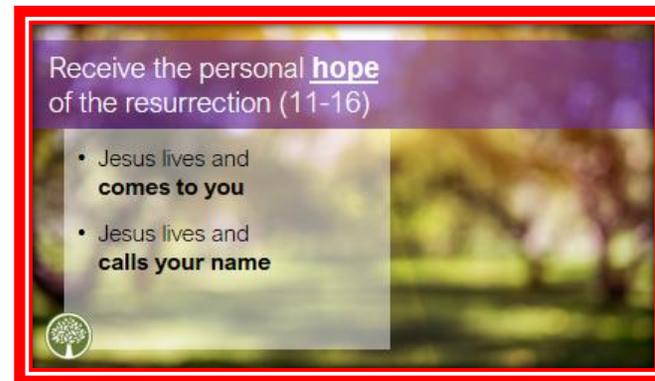
Sir, please just show me where his body is. And I will take him away.

She's distraught. Confused. And hurting deeply. But Jesus is no longer dead. Jesus is now alive. And He comes to Mary personally, and with one word He changes her life!

"Mary"

Instantly her mind is awakened by Jesus calling her name, and she turns and responds,

Rabboni, meaning Teacher or Master! O friends, join with Mary and receive the personal hope of the resurrection today!



Jesus lives and calls your name!

Jesus is alive, and He draws near to you – He wants you to personally know Him and find life in His resurrection power.

And if anyone here believes that Jesus doesn't have time for you, or doesn't love or care for you... consider afresh what caused Jesus to reveal Himself first to Mary.

After all, Mary the Magdalene is the very first human being to see the resurrected Christ! Let that soak in for a moment.

If Jesus' resurrection was like an action movie, who would you expect Jesus to show Himself to first? Probably Pilate right? Hey Pilate...remember me? Or Caiaphas the high Priest. Hey Caiaphas...boo!

Surprised to see me? Or Herod Himself... Hey do you have any more purple robes?

That's what we'd expect from Jesus' triumphant resurrection according to Hollywood, right?

But that's the very opposite of who Jesus chooses to reveal Himself to first. Not one of the twelve. Not His own mother. But a weeping distraught woman who had a very dark and demonic past. This is the one Jesus comes to. This is the name Jesus first calls.

Don't miss the hope of this, dear broken and hurting soul. Jesus is alive today, and He lives to come to you...yes to you...and He calls your name so that you might recognize Him as your Savior and Lord, and that you might receive the life that comes from believing on His name. Receive the personal hope of Jesus' resurrection. Turn from your pursuit of whatever you believe you must have in order to be happy, and see that Jesus Himself is calling your name today.

He knows you, He died for you. He rose from the dead so that you could live with Him forever. You don't need to weep. He has defeated and abolished death itself, and He now lives as the triumphant victor over sin and the grave! Will you turn and see Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

Of course Mary fell down and immediately grabbed ahold of Jesus' feet with a grip that said, "I'm never letting you out of my sight again!" I lost you once, but I'm never going to lose you again!!

But Jesus gently corrects her misunderstanding, and in the process calls all of us to,



Respond to the spiritual benefits of the resurrection.

Do not cling to me, Mary, for I have not yet ascended to the Father... Mary, I know you're glad to see me in person. I'm glad to see you too.



But my resurrection changes our relationship. You and I no longer need to relate to one another through a physical relationship, but now through a spiritual relationship.

Through my Spirit, I will now always be with you.
Through my resurrection and ascension, My Spirit will come so that you will never be apart from me. So let go of my physical body right now Mary, and instead, go and tell my brothers....my disciples...that,

I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

In other words, go tell my followers that I'm alive, and that I'm returning to be with God...but notice Jesus' careful distinction here.

Jesus doesn't say I'm going to *our* Father and *our* God. For Jesus rightly recognizes that He relates differently to God Himself than any of His followers. For only Jesus Himself is One with God in His very being.

And yet, through the resurrection, all of His followers' relationship with God has been changed...so that,

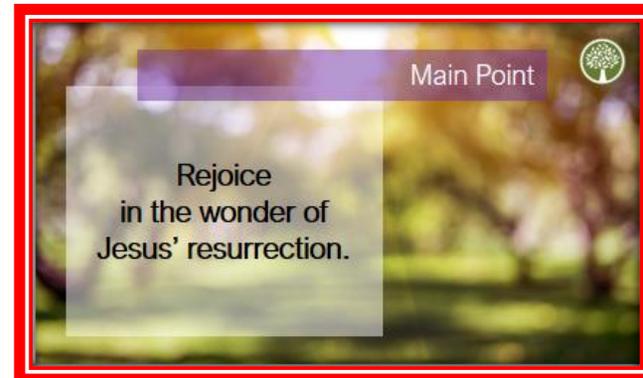


His resurrection secures our adoption.

Now Jesus' Father is also our Heavenly Father, and Jesus' God is also our God.

O believer – do not race past this glorious benefit of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus lives, and the tomb is empty, so that anyone who turns from their sin and answers the call of Jesus to follow Him, will have God Himself as your Father!

It doesn't matter how dark or demonic or confused your past has been. It doesn't matter what you have done, or how far you have gone. Today is a day of salvation for anyone who believes that Jesus died to pay for our sins and rose again to bring us to God!!



Dear friends, Rejoice in the wonder of Jesus' resurrection! Join with Mary and go announce this good news that Jesus is alive, and all who believe on Him might have their sins forgiven!

Jesus died to pay the penalty that our sins deserved. He rose again to prove that the penalty was paid in full, so all who believe on Him might receive eternal life. And He has now ascended into heaven, where He constantly lives to make intercession for all of God's children.

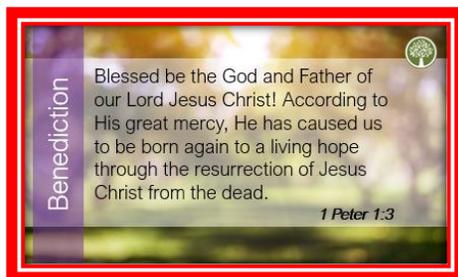
Will you believe that Jesus rose from the dead for you?



Let's pray.

<<Christ is Risen>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to
a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
1 Peter 1:3*

Recommended Resources on Seeing the Resurrected Lord:

- Psalm 16:10
- Proverbs 8:17
- Isaiah 53:10-12
- Hosea 6:2
- Jonah 1:17
- Matthew 20:1-20
- Mark 16:1-9
- Luke 7:47; 24:1-12
- John 10:3; 14:19
- Acts 2:23-24, 31-36; 10:39-43
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/the-resurrection-of-christ>
- *Lifted*, Sam Allbery
- *Easter Uncut*, Carl Laferton
- *Finally Alive*, John Piper
- *Twelve Extraordinary Women*, John MacArthur

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Mark 16:9, Luke 8:1-3. What do the Scriptures reveal to us about Mary's past (c.f. Mt 15:39)? What do you take away from the fact that Jesus chooses to reveal Himself first to Mary Magdalene, instead of others, after his resurrection?
2. Review John 20:17. Why do you think Jesus links the resurrection and ascension here? Why is Jesus' ascension so significant to Christians today? (c.f. Ps 68:18; Jn 14:3; Acts 1:11, 3:21; Eph 4:8-10; Col 3:1; Heb 7:25)
3. Review John 20:13-15. Who would be weeping for all of eternity if Mary would have found a body? Discuss together how sometimes what we perceive to be our greatest loss is actually God's greatest expression of grace and eternal joy in our life.
4. Review John 20:5-8. Why were the undisturbed grave clothes such a convincing evidence for Jesus' resurrection?
5. Review John 20:17. How is Jesus' relationship with God both similar and different to believers' relationship with God? How do you perceive your relationship with God currently? Do you believe He is truly your Father? On what basis?
6. Do you believe Jesus of Nazareth died, was buried, was raised again the third day, and ascended to heaven? Why or why not?