

**THAT
YOU
MAY
BELIEVE**

**EXPLORING
THE
MIRACLES
IN JOHN'S
GOSPEL**



KING OF KINGS
LOVE GOD | LOVE PEOPLE | MAKE DISCIPLES

Easter Sunday: The Miracle of the Resurrection. 1 April 2018

(Credit: Some thoughts borrowed from Mark Driscoll)

INTRODUCTION

Happy Easter Everyone! Good to be with you. Great to have you all here with us today. If you're new, my name is Neil, one of the pastors at the church, and we're at the end of a series called; "That you may believe!" We have been looking at the miracles of Jesus. This morning we experienced the joy of seeing 10 people get baptised at St James beach – I believe one of the greatest miracles of Jesus is how he can change us, turn our lives around, and help us to follow him. So it was very special for me this morning.

But in this series so far, we've looked at Jesus turn water into wine, we've seen him heal people, we've seen him walk on water, seen him feed 5000 people from a few fish and loaves, and even raise Lazarus to life again. It's been awesome! And the reason we have been doing all of this is to challenge people to truly believe... and to get on mission with us... trusting God for big things to come!

And so this has brought us to Easter Weekend, and on Good Friday we looked at the miracle of God's mercy at the cross, and we were reminded there of all that Jesus went through to take the penalty for our sin. And that brings us to the miracle we are looking at today... The Resurrection! That Jesus is alive! Amen?!

And this really is a big deal! Because without the resurrection, there would be no Christianity. **So let me pray...** and then we will get right in to the message about the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus...

I want to say once again... that the resurrection of Jesus is of massive importance!!!! One of the key things that it means to be a Christian, is that you believe Jesus rose from death!!! Amen?! Paul says it this way in **1 Corinthians 15:17**;

- **“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”**

Those are heavy words.... He says, if this is not true... as Christians... we are a joke! Paul goes on in this same chapter to say... that if Jesus is still dead – we are just pitiful. If Jesus is still dead – there is no hope in this life whatsoever! And so my plan today, is to show you... that Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus... is absolutely true, and you can trust in it with your whole life! I believe this with all my heart, that the resurrection of Jesus really happened, and it is something that can turn your life around.

Have you ever received news that had changed your life? That caused a big turn around in your life? Perhaps you were heading in one direction, and then suddenly you turned about and headed in the other direction. I think many of us have had life changing moments like that... the news of the death of a loved one, or maybe even the birth of a child... things like that can cause us to experience a real turn around in life.

Well, that first Easter... there were many turn arounds – for the disciples... for everyone in fact... Let's have a look at that story again... **John 20:1-18**

- **“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!”**

Have you ever had a really bad few days get even worse? I think that is what it was like for the disciples that first Easter. After the unfair trial of Jesus... with trumped up charges... the torturous... and agonising death of Jesus... now, when they went to visit His grave... He was gone!

Poor Mary... after the hectic events that had just passed... she was going to perform her last act of devotion... tending to Jesus' dead body... and when she got there - He was gone! Of course... in her grief... she jumped to what was an obvious conclusion – someone had stolen the body! In a final insultshe thought that they had taken Him away... And robbed them... even of his body! Poor Mary did not understand.

And I'm not being hard on her... I think we can all sympathise– her thinking was logical – I mean... dead guys... they don't generally move themselves! Had she forgotten what Jesus had told them about the resurrection? ... Or had she just dismissed it as impossible?

So she came to tell the guys... they have taken his body!!!! And the guys think, "Oh dear, here we go. The ladies are getting all emotional again!! Let's go check this out for ourselves. So, rather than taking Mary's word for it, the guys go to investigate themselves... **Verse 3**;

- **³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb.**
- **He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.**
- **⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.**

I can just imagine the scene... These guys had basically been in hiding – Jesus had just been killed... and they were fearful that they would be next! They were grieving... and they were confused. How could it all have gone as wrong as this?

And now... to top it all off... Mary says His body is gone! As they raced to the tomb... I wonder what was going through their minds – why have the Jews stolen his body? Or was it the Romans? Or someone else?? Or... did the all the things that Jesus said to them... about the resurrection... start to go through their minds?

They raced each other... but when they got there... they saw the tomb was indeed empty. The burial clothes were lying there... I wonder... did that miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead... cross through their minds? when they saw those grave clothes?

One of the disciples – probably John - reached the tomb first, and we are told that... **"He saw... and believed."** He saw... and believed. That's my prayer for you today. That you will see the resurrection... And believe!

For the disciples... Up until now... the teachings from Jesus... that He would die... and be raised from the dead... had seemed impossible, but now... seeing the empty tomb... and the grave clothes... John believed.

Yet according to verse 9, I still don't think they understand the significance of it all. The scene then moves back to Mary who is deep in her grief. **Verse 11**;

- **¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"**

- “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”
- Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).
- ¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”
- ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

What an amazing turn around. What was looking... to be the worst day of her life... has been turned... to the best and most amazing day ever! Not only had Jesus risen from the dead, but He was right there with her...

First she had gone to the disciples with terrible news – His body is gone! Now she has returned with amazing news – **I have seen the Lord!**

There are so many turn-arounds in this Easter story, let me mention one or two... Firstly...

1. JESUS TURNED FROM DEATH TO LIFE

On Friday... we were remembering the death of Jesus – that horrible torturous death... but now... on Sunday... we remember that death could not contain Him. He bore the punishment for our sin & He defeated both sin and death. There is now nothing that can separate us from God’s love.

What a miracle! Jesus turned around from death to life! What had seemed impossible became possible... because Jesus is stronger than death!

Now some people don’t understand the resurrection.

So let me try and help explain it...

So it’s... you’re dead, and then you’re alive again physically. That’s what resurrection means. Jesus truly turned from death, to life! And you know what... the bible says that for those who believe... one day... we too will be resurrected. Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection... and all who follow him will also be resurrected at the appointed time. So... Jesus turned from death to life! Secondly...

2. THE DISCIPLES TURNED FROM DEPRESSION TO BELIEF

The disciples must have been dizzy from all the turn-arounds that they had experienced that last week with Jesus. Simon Peter had gone from fighting off soldiers... to denying he ever knew Jesus. The disciples didn't seem to know what was going on – when they went with Jesus to Jerusalem... and they received that rapturous welcome on Palm Sunday... they were on the winning team! But after Jesus crucifixion... they felt defeated and scared. **Verse 19** of our passage goes on and says;

- **On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side.**
- **The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.**

Even though they saw the empty tomb... and we are told they believed... they still did not understand what was going on... and they were terrified! But when they met the risen Christ... and saw that He was alive! They were transformed... With the help of the Holy Spirit... this fearful lot started the spread of the gospel all across the world – what a turn-around.

And when I see what these guys were willing to go through... the persecution... the martyrdom... it is really just further convincing to me of the truth to what they believed. I mean, why would they testify to this if it were not true. There was nothing in it for them. You even had guys like Thomas. You remember what Thomas was? The doubter – the doubting Thomas, right? You've heard that expression? “Oh, you're a doubting Thomas.” Well, Thomas was a guy who was told “Jesus is resurrected!” And he said, “I don't believe it. People don't resurrect.” You know, and Thomas is right. They don't. It's unusual! And that's the point.

And so Thomas said, “I want to see for myself,” and he did... he got to see Jesus. And Jesus said, “Look, Thomas... here's my scars in my hands and side. It's me, Thomas.” And Thomas fell down and worshiped, saying, “My Lord, my God.” He worshiped Jesus. Now, he didn't initially believe it. He needed to be convinced. But he was. And he made that turn. Some of us can be doubters like Thomas. And we need to trust his testimony, make that turn.

But what about Mary... I just love that the ladies are in on this... and that it was actually Mary who was first to see Jesus. Ladies, I just want to say this, “God values you so much!” The first person to see Jesus resurrected was Mary. What changed for Mary? Well...

3. MARY TURNED FROM GRIEF AND HOPELESSNESS, TO JOY AND MISSIONARY PASSION!

Mary Magdalene was devastated at Jesus death – this man... who she had followed was now gone... Her whole life had been turned on its head by His death. But soon her tears turned to joy... and the need to spread the wonderful news. In verse 18 she went to the disciples and says; **“I have seen the Lord!”** I have seen the Lord.

I love that! And friends, I want to point something out here. It is often those... who go searching for the Lord... who end up finding him. Don't get me wrong, I know there are people like Paul, who get knocked off their horse by God and didn't see it coming, and God says; “Hi, here I am. I'm real. You need to believe in me!” That happens!

But often, those who experience God – are those who go seeking him, like Mary. So here's my challenge to you. You want to see him? You want to experience him in your life? Then seek him. Seek, and you shall?... (Find). So let me close with this...

4. WHICH WAY WILL YOU TURN?

When you are confronted with the empty grave this Easter... How do you respond... Which way will you turn?

- **Have you turned towards Jesus and believed?**

Because of the resurrection. The church was born. And today a few billion people on earth call themselves Christians. There is no explanation how 120 scared people in an upper room end up becoming a few billion people around the globe that all worship Jesus as God.

And he is, above and beyond everyone who has ever lived, the most influential man in history. If Jesus didn't rise from death, then how do you explain all of this? What other possible answer could there be? Friends, Jesus rose from the dead – He has defeated sin and death – do you believe that? If so... put your trust in Him... for He is able to do the impossible. But also...

- **Have you turned away from hopelessness to life?**

Many of us are stuck in our problems and circumstances – we don't see any hope. Yet we believe in a God who can do miracles. Today... Will you trust Him with whatever it is... that is causing you to grieve... and is pressing down on your shoulders?

Because here's the incredible thing about the resurrection. Jesus Christ is alive right now! He's ascended back into heaven! He's seated on a throne! He's ruling as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! He hears prayers because he's alive! And He saves people because he's alive! And He knows you... because he's alive! And He's coming again! He's prepared a place for us... because he's alive! Jesus Christ is alive! never to die again!

God became a man, lived without sin, died in our place on a cross for our sins, was buried, three days later rose, ascended into heaven, and is returning again to judge the living and the dead and to establish an eternal Kingdom. That's Jesus. That's my Jesus. That's our Jesus.

And we absolutely believe this at King of Kings Church. And what I would say to you today is... this is not something that you can remain neutral on... This is something that you must decide on for yourself.... "Do I believe Jesus is alive... or do I believe that Jesus is dead?" Because this is the distinguishing feature of what it means to be Christian. So what about you????

What do you believe?

Let's pray together...