

Sermon Series: Extraordinary Resurrection
Sermon Title: The Extraordinary Resurrection of Jesus!
Sermon Text: John 20:1-30
Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry

Sermon Summary

This message looks at 8 lessons to be learned from the events surrounding the extraordinary resurrection of Jesus as told by John in the 20th chapter of the gospel that bears his name. We learn lessons from these verses as we look at the individuals who interacted with Jesus following His resurrection. One of the most important lessons is the fact that we have to eventually decide whether or not we believe Jesus was truly resurrected from the dead. If we believe and accept His resurrection as truth, many benefits flow into our lives. When a person chooses to deny the resurrection of Christ they lose the extraordinary hope and power that comes through the resurrection. Jesus revealed Himself to the Disciples and to many others so they could understand He had defeated not only death and the grave, but the very enemies of God. It was indeed a glorious and extraordinary victory.

Full Sermon Notes

Praise The Lord!! You took my place laid inside my tomb of sin
You were buried for three days but then You walked right out again
And now death has no sting and life has no end
For I have been transformed by the blood of the Lamb

Thank You Jesus! Let's go to the Lord right now in prayer and ask Him to be with us in amazing and extraordinary ways today as we discover the reality of the extraordinary resurrection of Jesus!

LET'S PRAY!

Introduction: We are going to be in John chapter 20 today, so you can go ahead and open your Bibles or your Bible app to that passage. If you have the Youversion Bible App on your phone, you can go to more, and events and click on Northshore Church and you will have the full sermon notes in your hand!

Let me say this: we typically think of empty as a bad thing! Like the gas tank, the fridge, the bank account, you know what I mean, empty is usually bad, but not on Easter, or as I like to call it, Resurrection Day! Today we celebrate empty!! The empty gift God gave to the world was an empty tomb which should fill us to the brim with hope, joy, peace and thankfulness! There are those in our world who wonder what in the world we are celebrating and why. There are many who see us as a rather superstitious lot who put a lot of faith and hope in a very old story about a man who was supposedly crucified, buried, and rose again on the third day. There are those who think we are delusional, misled, and to be pitted. Some think we simply need a crutch to make it through this life. They say Jesus is the crutch. My Response: Jesus is not only my

crutch, He is so much more! Jesus is my spiritual life support! Without Him I would be spiritually dead! Spiritual death is a tragedy with eternal implications!

Bill Maher, host of HBO's Real Time With Bill Maher made this statement...

"We are a nation that is unenlightened because of religion... I think that religion stops people from thinking... I think religion is a neurological disorder. If you look at it logically, it's something that was drilled into your head when you were a small child."

That's so sad! Skeptics are not new. Noah had his skeptics, Moses had his, and Jesus had His! But let me challenge the skeptics with this: When you objectively look at all the facts surrounding Jesus and the Biblical account of His life, death and resurrection, the questions and objections begin to melt away! The reason I say that is this: the only way to have such a dismissive view of the Bible and the One it points to is to ignore extraordinary and compelling evidence we find that supports the reality of Jesus and the claims He made and others made about Him! When speaking of the Bible, Dr. Clark H. Pinnock states...

"There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies, and offering so superb an array of historical data on which an intelligent decision may be made. An honest [person] cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational [i.e., antinatural] bias."

Here's my point: If, for whatever reason, you do not want to believe the miracles surrounding Jesus Christ, you will find an excuse no matter how much evidence is presented to you! However, if you desire to know the truth, you will at least take an objective look at the claims of Jesus and at least consider the corroborating historical evidence before you make up your mind. One of the most convincing reasons to believe the Biblical account of Christ's resurrection is the fact that many of the people who knew Jesus before His death evidently saw Him after the resurrection and were convinced it was really Him. How do we know they were really convinced? When confronted and questioned about their faith in a risen Lord, they refused to deny what they had seen and heard even though many of them would die for that refusal.

If you are a student of history, you know many people have died for lies before. However, very few people, if any, have ever been willing to die for something they knew to be a lie. To the contrary, people die for a lie only when they believe it to be true!

The Jewish authorities and the Roman government went to extraordinary means to ensure that Jesus' body was not stolen. The tomb was sealed and Roman guards were placed to guard it. They feared the disciples would steal it and then fabricate a resurrection story. But again, the problem with this reasoning is that it doesn't make sense. Remember, the disciples before the resurrection had abandoned Jesus, and Peter denied ever knowing Him. They feared for their lives. They were fishermen, not trained fighters. It doesn't make sense that they would risk their lives now, just to perpetrate a lie. What good is a dead Messiah? If the disciples had stolen the

body of Jesus and simply buried Him somewhere else, how is it they would all be willing to die for a lie? How is it they would be willing to see their families suffer for something they knew to be false? The disciples insisted that Jesus had risen even though they had no good earthly reason to do so. Nothing to gain: no financial incentives, no book deals from publishers, no television interviews for a moment of fame! But they did have everything to lose: persecution, and death! At this point, someone might say, "well of course the Bible's going to say those people died for their faith in Jesus, what do you expect?" To that I respond: much of what we know about the early Christian martyrs, and especially the disciples, does not come from the Bible but from other historical documents. The writings of Josephus, who was a Jewish historian, and others like Ignatius, Polycarp, Dionysius of Corinth, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. There's some amazing books that go into detail about all of these things, like, Lee Strobel's Case for Christ, and Case for the Resurrection. Or Josh McDowell's Evidence that Demands a Verdict and More Than a Carpenter! Good resources!

What I will do today is read to you the story of the resurrection as told by John in chapter 20 of his gospel, and let God's Word speak to you. I will give some commentary along the way to point out some amazing resurrection lessons, but God's Word is truth and I pray you will be open to at least consider the evidence of the extraordinary resurrection of Jesus. God's Word has a supernatural power to convince our hearts and minds because it was written under the inspiration of The Holy Spirit, handed down under the careful direction of The Holy Spirit, and is presently accompanied by the conviction of The Holy Spirit! With that in mind, let me say this: the disciples had expected Jesus to work a miracle at the last minute, avoid the cross, and set up an earthly kingdom. He did not. The disciples were discouraged and returned to fishing! In their minds it was over for them. Their hopes had been destroyed on the cross, because they didn't understand the cross, until something wonderful took place that would change their lives, their world, and history - The Extraordinary Resurrection of Jesus! So open your Bibles to John chapter 20 and let's begin our study of the extraordinary resurrection of Jesus and the extraordinary lessons we can learn from it...

Our Text

John 20:1 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.

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 1 - We have to look beyond what our eyes can see or can't see!

Ok, you and I might think, "the stone's gone, that's a good thing, right?" But not from Mary's point of view. Things just got worse. Not only had they murdered Jesus, now someone had desecrated the grave by robbing it or worse still, maybe someone had stolen the body of Jesus. Sometimes it's so hard not to focus on the horrible circumstances we are going through! Sometimes things look unbelievably bad, but because of Jesus' resurrection, His defeating death and the grave we can trust Romans 8:28...

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Let me give you a modern day example. On Mar 24, 2005, a man opened fire in an Atlanta courthouse killing 3 people and before his capture killed another person. He forced his way into the apartment of a young lady by the name of Ashley Smith. Ashley was a 26 year old widowed mother. Here's Ashley's story: Her dad had committed suicide when she was a child/Her mother abandoned her/Her grandparents raised her but she rejected their faith and became a very troubled teen/She married, but her husband was stabbed and died in her arms/She turned to drugs and became addicted. But the extraordinary resurrection comes to play here. Ashley went through a drug rehab, embraced faith in Christ, and went back to school! She was working her way through Rick Warren's book "The Purpose Driven Life" when she was taken hostage by the courthouse shooter. She shared her testimony with her kidnapper. She talked about her life of drugs and tragedy, but shared how Christ had changed her life. She made pancakes for the guy! He let her go so she could go see her daughter. She then called 911 and the guy ended up surrendering to police without a fight. She said this...

"My life is testimony that God can use us even in the midst of tragedy and miracles do happen,"

Mary Magdalene would end up with an amazing testimony as well. After she sees the open tomb this happens...

Our Text

John 20:2 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!"

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 2 - God's not afraid to use broken people!

Mary Magdalene makes a b-line to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple, probably John. Now you don't need to miss this. John makes it a point to show how God uses imperfect people to accomplish His work. Peter was evidently still considered the leader among the disciples as he was the first person Mary Magdalene sought out to tell the news. Remember, Peter's the one who denied Jesus three times just before His Crucifixion. He had wept bitterly over this. Some people believe John may have been with Peter trying to encourage him to continue in his leadership position. But he's pretty depressed right now! At any rate, Peter is still the go to person. And who was this Mary Magdalene who had gotten up before daylight to go to the tomb? She was the Mary from Magdala whom Jesus had earlier cast out seven demons. She had become one of the inner circle of Jesus' closest friends. But she was from a town notoriously wicked and she had this history of psychophysical issues. However, our story today will show you how God chooses to use the most unlikely vessels to carry His life changing message to the world! It is a little talked about side story of the resurrection, but so important! Dr. William E. Hull put it this way...

“The story of Mary Magdalene beckons the humblest witness to become a harbinger of hope in a world weary with the brutal decisions of its prestigious leaders.”

William E. Hull, “John,” in Luke—John, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1970), 364.

You may think God can't use you because you're broken! Think again! God uses broken people! Hey, we're all broken in some way and in need of God's healing. But don't forget what happened on Good Friday, a good day for us, a terribly difficult day for Jesus.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.
Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

God heals and uses sin broken people! Amen? Amen! Back to...

Our Text John 20:3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.

John 20:4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

(Now remember, John is writing this story so he very humbly refers to himself as the other disciple who outran Peter)

John 20:5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

John 20:6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,

John 20:7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 3 - Jesus' body had been resurrected and was no longer bound by physical limitations!

Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time. That's what we would call a divine mystery! He had a real human body and that body had suffered the most excruciating torture and pain that any human had ever faced! And in the spiritual realm, he who knew no sin became sin for us on that day! In other words He had taken the weight of the sin of the entire world, past, present and future and paid the penalty! We can't even begin to wrap our minds around that! And because some people couldn't wrap their minds around all that Jesus was, fully God, fully human, they began to come up with some really absurd ways to try and explain things. They were called gnostics, based on the Greek word for knowledge, gnōsis. They would later teach that Jesus was only spiritual and didn't really have a physical body. To that, John would say...

2 John 7 ...many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Jesus had indeed been in a real, literal physical body. However, after the resurrection, it was different. When we contrast Jesus' resurrection with that of Lazarus we find Lazarus was bound by his grave clothes and had to be unbound, but not Jesus! Praise God, He was no longer bound by anything!! He was no longer held captive in the heart of the earth. Which by the way isn't just referring to being in the tomb. It is referring to being in the throes of the suffering Jesus was called to endure on our behalf. The passion of the Christ, the suffering, began in a major way on Thursday not on Friday. This explains the confusion many have had concerning Jesus' words to the Pharisees...

Matthew 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Some have wondered what this meant since Jesus was only in the tomb Friday night and Saturday night. However, the arrest happened on Thursday night, and Jesus had stated earlier in the day on Thursday these words...

John 12:27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

Remember Jesus' words to the disciples when He was about to be betrayed?

"The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

So Jesus was in the belly of earth's suffering beginning on Thursday! But now Sunday has arrived! Let's continue...

Our Text

John 20:8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

John 20:9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

John 20:10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 4 - Sometimes it's hard to believe even when we see!

The disciples didn't yet fully understand what was happening, or what to do with what they were experiencing! But their belief is growing! How many of us have heard or used the statement, "I just couldn't believe my eyes?" Peter and John saw the stone rolled away, the empty tomb, the garments folded nicely and the head wrap lying there as if Jesus had just passed right through it. In fact He did! Once again Dr. Hull gives insight...

This careful description of the grave-clothes was obviously of great significance as an indication that Jesus had risen in a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44) that transcended the limitations of the natural order...

William E. Hull, “John,” in Luke—John, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1970), 365.

However, Luke tells us when Mary Magdalene and the other women initially told the disciples the stone was rolled away, “their words seemed like nonsense.” But now John sees and believes. But it seems his belief may have still been somewhat reserved because we don’t see them jumping up and down and rejoicing! John simply says they went home. They were still having a hard time believing their eyes. But watch what happens next with Mary Magdalene...

Our Text

John 20:11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb

John 20:12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

John 20:13 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.”

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 5 - Grief can be blinding!

Instead of seeing two angels and thinking, wow, Jesus must have truly risen. She still thinks someone has stolen the body. It’s pretty amazing what Mary saw and yet she was not seeing! If you’ve ever experienced grief you know that it can take your breath away and can cause temporary spiritual blindness! It turns your world upside down and sometimes it takes some time for anything to make sense. And sometimes we never figure out the tough questions of why, at least in this world, but that’s where our faith in God must take over! Remember Christians are not exempt from grief, but we have a blessed hope. A hope that is backed by the promises of God Almighty!! I’ve quoted this song before, but it says our hope is not a “hope so someday,” but a “know so one day!” Paul reminds us of this in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14...

1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

The resurrection doesn’t eliminate grief in our life, but it changes our perspective! And speaking of perspective, Mary is about to have a perspective change...

Our Text

John 20:14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

John 20:15 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."

John 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

John 20:17 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.'"

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 6 - In the Spiritual realm it is more important to hear than to see!

This was the most amazing case of mistaken identity ever! Mary sees a lowly servant instead of the risen Savior! Seeing is not always believing, but hearing can be. Mary needed to hear more than she needed to see. And Jesus spoke not only her name, which caused her to see, but He gave her an important message. In Greek this verb had the meaning of "do not continue holding on to me." What message was Jesus conveying to her? He was letting her know that He would be ascending to The Father and would no longer be with them in physical form, and she should let go of her dependence on His physical presence with her so that He could live in her heart by way of the Holy Spirit. This was a message He needed the disciples to understand as well. So He sends her on a mission to tell them what He had said. Which she did...

John 20:18 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.

Is there other Scripture to back up this idea that it is more important to hear than to see?
Yes...

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by faith, not by sight.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Now we come to a very fascinating portion of our story. Jesus confirms in person the message He had sent through Mary Magdalene...

Our Text

John 20:19 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!"

John 20:20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 7 - Because of the Resurrection Jesus lives in each believer through His Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit brings us peace! He brings us God's continual presence! He brings the joy of the Lord into our lives. He commissions us to share God's message with the world. Jesus would no longer be with them in the flesh or confined by that physical body! He would, by way of the Holy Spirit, be able to be with all believers all over the world. And just as God had breathed in Adam's nostrils and Adam became a living human spirit, now Jesus breathed The Holy Spirit to His disciples and to us. And then He gives us an awesome responsibility...

John 20:23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Wait a minute. What did He say? What did He mean? First of all, Jesus was not giving the disciples the freedom to hold eternal vendettas against people they didn't like. No, they were to preach the gospel of repentance to the world and to proclaim to the world that anyone willing to turn from their wickedness and receive the wonderful forgiveness Jesus suffered and died to give them would be saved!

Our Text

John 20:24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

John 20:25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

John 20:28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Extraordinary Resurrection Lesson 8 - You can believe and still have some questions, but there is an initial step of faith that we all must take!

It is very important for you to note that Jesus wasn't angry with Thomas for doubting. Jesus didn't put him down or ridicule him. Jesus did, however, after presenting Thomas with the evidence, ask him to stop doubting and believe! If you are a doubter, I promise, God's not angry with you. He's a big God who can handle your doubts. But you must, at some point, make up your mind. I've already mentioned the group of heretics called Gnostics who believed the material world is all evil and only the spirit world is good. As a result of this belief, the Gnostics denied that Jesus had a real physical body. There is another extreme. Some suggest that Jesus was only human and not divine, therefore He had no special power over sin and death or special power to reconcile man to God. You may not know this, but Thomas Jefferson, one of our founding fathers, had such a view. He didn't believe in the miracles of the New Testament. He actually sat down with a knife and a couple of Bibles and cut out the parts he didn't believe and took the rest and pasted it together. This Bible is known as the Jefferson Bible and for over 50 years was printed and given to freshman Congressmen when they took office. The Jefferson Bible ends the story of Jesus like this..."There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone at the mouth of the sepulcher and departed." That's it! It just ends with the Burial. You see, Jefferson believed Jesus to be a great moral teacher, but not divine or capable of miracles, so for Jefferson there was no resurrection. Here's the deal...

If Jesus was just a good moral teacher here's what we lose...we lose the concept of being reconciled to God through the forgiveness of sin, and we lose the hope of having help in our struggle against sin! In other words, we're back to square one. It's all on us and our ability to do good, and we're back under the law and if we break it at any point, then we're doomed. If Jesus was just a good teacher, then there's no Holy Spirit to give us supernatural power over sin's dark power. History, at least my personal history, tells me this is not good. And I think if we look at the history of humankind, it's pretty much the same thing. Not good. We are getting glimpses of this in our world right now! And if Jesus was just a good moral teacher, we also lose victory over death and the grave which means we lose the hope of eternal life.

Now, you may not take an actual knife and cut out the parts of the Bible you don't like, but many do pick and choose the parts they will believe and the parts they will ignore. Listen to the way John ends this chapter...

John 20:30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The events and details surrounding the resurrection were written for you so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing you may have life in His name. Peter went from denying Jesus three times because he feared the religious leaders would take his life, to making this public statement to them...

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

Acts 3:14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

Acts 3:15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Sometime later this was written about those religious leaders...

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19 But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!

Acts 4:20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

An Extraordinary God + Ordinary people = Transformed Lives! What changed for the disciples?
The Extraordinary Resurrection of Jesus! Let's pray!