**IF THE TOMB IS EMPTY- What does it mean?**

**Easter Services**

Saturday, 4/8- Sunday, 4/9/23

**WE Slide 1 HAPPY RESURRECTION DAY WEEKEND! Or HAPPY EASTER!** However you say it, we’re celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ! **The Bible isn’t just a book of moralistic stories giving us some helpful truisms for life.** The Bible is a God-breathed book of poetry, prose, prophecy, doctrine, and real life historical events, like the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that will transform our lives if we’ll allow it. **Jesus Christ really lived, He really died a horrific death on a cross, He really is God, and because He’s God He really rose again from the dead. And since He rose from the dead the question is, what does it mean for you and me today?** That’s the question we want to answer as we look at the Apostle John’s eyewitness account of the resurrection. **Turn in your Bibles/devices to John 20, pg. 1085, where we find Mary Magdalene making her way to the tomb where Jesus was buried.** Let’s see what John has to say. **READ John 20:1-2 Slide 2-3**

**Who are they?** Jewish authorities? Roman authorities? Angels? **The other gospels said angels talked to them before running back to tell Peter/John.** **What’s going on here?** We have to understand that this was a highly emotional time- grief, shock, earthquake, angels showing up, soldiers knocked out, they’ve run ¾ mile. **There’s so much going on in their heads/hearts, so much to process, that by the time they get back all they can get out is “they’ve taken away the Lord/we don’t know where He is”.** Whatever the case the tomb is empty. **So, what are the explanations for how the tomb could be empty? Slide 4**

**GOD**

1. **THE TOMB IS EMPTY- Possible Explanations**
2. **OPTION #1- Mary Magdalene Went to the Wrong Tomb** **No and here’s why…**
3. She knew where they buried Jesus, Matt. 27:61; Luke 23:55- she/others followed Joseph, Nicodemus.
4. Several women went with Mary when she went back, Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1
5. They would have seen the 16 Roman soldiers on the ground due to earthquake, Matt. 27:65-28:4
6. **OPTION #2- Slide 5 The Disciples Took Jesus’ Body and Claimed He Rose Again**
7. They would have had to overpower 16 Roman soldiers to get to the tomb.
8. They would have taken the wrappings/face cloth, John 20:6-7
9. Impossible for 12-120 people to keep a lie going especially when their lives were at stake, Lk 24:33 **ILLUSTRATION: Slide 6-8** ***Charles Colson,*** *advisor to President Nixon, guilty of obstruction of justice in Watergate scandal, 7 months in prison, started Prison Fellowship Ministries after coming to faith in Jesus Christ.*

**If the disciples didn’t take the body how else could the tomb have been empty? Slide 9**

1. **OPTION #3- The Authorities Removed Jesus’ Body That’s easily refuted…**
2. They needed His body to prove He didn’t rise from the dead. Why would they take it out?

**Mary went to the right tomb, the disciples would have had to overpower 16 soldiers, and the authorities needed Jesus’ body so they wouldn’t have moved it, so the only other option is… Slide 10**

1. **OPTION #4- Jesus Rose from the Dead As He Promised**
2. Jesus is God/infinitely powerful and able to raise Him from the dead.
3. Jesus could have left tomb without moving the stone; He wanted people to see He was really gone.
4. It’s the only option that makes sense when all the evidence is considered; it’s the logical conclusion.

**WELL, THIS IS AWESOME! Jesus rose from the dead. Peter/John will set Mary straight right?** **READ John 20:3-11a Slide 11-17 How could Jesus’ closest followers- Mary Magdalene, Peter, John- not believe Jesus rose from the dead!** That’s impossible! **Why weren’t they expecting it?** Waiting at the tomb on Sunday morning to see it? **John tells us that at that time he/other disciples Slide 18 DIDN’T UNDERSTAND the Scripture that Jesus must rise again.**

1. **THE UNEXPECTED RESURRECTION**
2. **They Didn’t Understand the Scripture-** the Messiah had to die/rise again for man’s sin.

**Slide 19 Like people today they knew bits/pieces of what the Bible says but didn’t connect the dots.**

1. **They Knew Bits/Pieces of the OT But Hadn’t Connected the Dots**
2. They knew the OT talked about a coming King/Messiah and believed it was Jesus.
3. They knew the OT talked about a kingdom of God- thought it was only physical, not spiritual.
4. They thought they’d have political power/even argued over who would be the greatest in the kingdom.
5. Peter drew his sword against the 200 soldiers who came to arrest Jesus, he’d defend the kingdom.
6. Even at Jesus’ ascension they asked if it was now that He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel. **TALK ABOUT ONE TRACK MINDS!!**

**They missed the SPIRITUAL aspect of the kingdom/kingdom of heaven- Jesus reigning as king in people’s hearts first.** They couldn’t connect the dots because they weren’t thinking spiritually. **Slide 20 Their focus was on this earth, this life, what THEIR EXPECTATIONS were of Jesus, not what Jesus actually taught.**

1. **They Interpreted Jesus’ Teaching Based on Their Expectations**
2. People today do this all the time- issues of morality, church leadership, salvation you’ll get all sorts of opinions based on everything/one else except what Jesus actually taught.
3. Based on their expectations it made no sense for Jesus to die or that He could rise again.

**So, Peter/John headed home disturbed/confused leaving Mary to stand there balling her eyes out.** Let’s see what happens next. **READ John 20:11b- 18 Slide 21-28 So good that Jesus show up for Mary and relieve her hopelessness.**

1. **JESUS SHOWS UP, John 20:11b-29**
2. **Jesus Shows Up… To Relieve Mary’s Hopelessness, John 11b-18**
   * 1. EARTHLY focus- she was upset because she didn’t know where they took Him and wouldn’t have a place to go and to remember Jesus.
     2. SPIRITUAL focus- Jesus reminds her of His spiritual mission/go remind the disciples of the plan.

**She takes off and lets the disciples know that she had seen Jesus.** **INTERESTING INFO:** In Luke 24:10-11 after talking to Mary we’re told that Jesus appeared to 2 unnamed disciples who were walking to Emmaus and they came back to the disciples to tell them they had seen Jesus. **Here’s John’s take. READ John 20:19-24 Slide 29-34** Jesus shows up to relieve the disciples of their fear as they hide from the authorities in a locked house.

1. **Jesus Shows Up…To Relieve the Disciples’ Fear, John 19-24** 
   * + 1. Earthly focus- they’re scared, the authorities killed Jesus, stole His body, and now they’re next.
       2. Jesus just appears; Luke says they were shocked, think He’s a ghost.
       3. Spiritual focus- He reminds them of their mission, the promised Holy Spirit and their gospel authority. **I don’t have time to get into the weeds on this, glad to meet if you have questions.**
   1. Jesus reminds them that He was sending them into the world for the same reason God sent Jesus into the world.
   2. Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Not the fulfillment of His promise- that comes later. No, promise was to all the disciples and Thomas wasn’t there. **Probably the point in Luke 24 where Jesus opened their minds to understand why He died/rose again.**
   3. Then He reminded them of the authority all believers have based on the Bible to say when a person’s sins are forgiven and when they aren’t forgiven.
      * 1. Not teaching Christians confess sins to apostles/church leaders/priests who forgive them or not.
        2. One reason is that this wasn’t said to just Peter, or disciples, but to a room full of followers, Lk 24:33.
        3. Similar wording in Matthew 16:19; 18:18 saying that all believers have the authority to declare who is forgiven by God and who is not forgiven based on the authority of God’s Word.

**As you might guess Jesus’ appearance and reminder of their mission has them excited so when they find Thomas they let him know about it.** Here’s how that went down. **READ John 20:25-29 Slide 35-39 Jesus shows up to relieve Mary’s hopelessness.** He shows up to relieve the disciples’ fear and now He makes a special trip back and shows up to relieve Thomas’ doubt. **Jesus is in the business of showing up and knocking down people’s BARRIERS TO BELIEF.**

1. **Jesus Shows Up…To Relieve Thomas’ Doubt, John 25-29**
   * + - 1. Earthly focus- Thomas wanted physical proof of Jesus’ resurrection; not just see Him but touch the wounds Jesus suffered in the crucifixion.
         2. Spiritual focus- Thomas actually just needed to see Jesus and he believed.
2. Jesus knew exactly what Thomas had said and gave him the opportunity to have his doubt removed.
3. Thomas didn’t need to actually see Jesus’ scars, Jesus was standing in front of him and he believed.

**YOU TAKEAWAYS**

**Slide 40 THE RESURRECTION IS TRUE! Jesus did rise from the dead and Him showing up changed everything for His followers.** Their hopelessness/fear/doubt all changed to belief and we know THAT belief turned into action as they fearlessly brought the gospel to the world just as He commanded. **But for us today, if the tomb is empty, and it is, what does it mean for us? Slide 41 For BELIEVERS it is a reminder that we need to GET ON WITH HIS MISSION- spread the Gospel message.**

1. **WHAT THE RESURRECTION MEANS FOR US TODAY**
2. **Jesus Reminds BELIEVERS Get On with Jesus’ Mission- Spread the Gospel**
3. Mary/disciples allowed their earthly focus to distract from Jesus’ spiritual mission.
4. We tend to get distracted by life’s struggles, frustrations, media, culture, politics- ready to go to battle against those who believe differently than us on cultural/political issues.
5. Like Jesus told the disciples- “As the Father sent Me, I also send you.”
6. Each of us believers have been saved by God, sent by Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to get His message of love/forgiveness/restored relationship out to those in our lives.
7. It was Jesus’ purpose for coming/dying/rising from the dead, and it is our purpose for continuing to live.
8. When we look at all our circumstances, frustrations, relationships, through the lens of the gospel it gives us clarity as to how we should respond in those situations- to represent Christ/share the gospel.

**John finishes this chapter with the purpose for why he wrote which answers the question of what the resurrection means for those who don’t believe.** We’ve referenced it throughout our series in John but let me remind you of what he wrote. **READ John 20:30-31 Slide 42-44 For you who don’t yet believe, Jesus’ resurrection means that you need to BELIEVE He is who he says He is and RECEIVE the eternal life God offers.**

1. **Jesus Challenges UNBELIEVERS to BELIEVE and RECEIVE Eternal Life**

Like Thomas- tell Jesus you believe He is your SAVIOR from sin, the LORD of your life and your GOD whom you’ll worship with your life.

**We who believe without seeing are blessed for the faith we demonstrate.** I’d love to know you made that decision today- let me know, CONNECT Card. **If you’re not there yet** **Slide 45 let me ask you,** **what’s your BARRIER TO BELIEF?** HOPELESS because you can’t seem to find/connect with God? FEARFUL of what other people might say/do if you believe Him? Do you DOUBT His existence/resurrection? **Then let me challenge you to do something. Slide 46**

Let Jesus to show up in your life. **How do you do that today since Jesus isn’t here physically?**

1. Jesus isn’t, but His Word is, as is God the Holy Spirit, and we who have had the same questions and found our answers in Jesus.
2. Let us help you.

**I’m going to close our service in a different way than what I’d normally do for Easter.** As the Band comes up I want to give you this CHALLENGE and OFFER. **Slide 47 If you’re interested in having me walk through with you what God has to say in the Bible about your BARRIER TO BELIEF then contact me to set up a time to talk.**

Fill out a Connect Card with your name and the best way to contact you.

Text Pastor Harald at 240-818-2043

**LET’S STAND AND SING THIS CLOSING SONG WITH THE BAND. If you’d like to talk or have questions I’ll be in the back and would love to talk with you.**