

3.31.19 ~ **John 20:1-18**, The Empty Tomb

As we studied last week, late Friday afternoon of Passover week, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" and He gave up His spirit and died. Joseph of Arimathea, along with Nicodemus (who came to Jesus at night), both religious leaders and members of the Sanhedrin, came and took Jesus' body down, prepared it for burial, and then placed it in a tomb nearby.

Read John 20:1-10... It is now Sunday morning, the first day of the week (cf. Luke 24:1), the Sabbath is over, it is after the Sabbath (cf. Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1).

The synoptic Gospels record a variety of women who come to the tomb that morning, but John only mentions Mary Magdalene, telling us that she came while it was still dark; whereas, we are told (**Mark 16:1-2**), "Mary Magdalene (M), and Mary the mother of James, and Salome... bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. They came to the tomb when the sun had risen."

So, Mary M came earlier in the dark, but the others came after the sun had come up. Mary M found the stone covering the entrance to the tomb had been moved aside, this caused her to become fearful, for perhaps grave robbers had come and taken the Lord's body?

So Mary took off running to find Peter and John, and when she did she told them the Lord's body had been taken from the tomb and she didn't know where it was.

It would seem that the other women arrived after Mary had left the tomb to find Peter and John; evidently, Mary wasn't present at the tomb with the other women, when the angels appeared and announced Christ's resurrection (cf. Matthew 28:5-6; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8).

Peter and John, hearing the women's reports, not understanding them, took off running to see what had happened (**Luke 24:11**,) "But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them."

John tells us that he got to the tomb first, and looking in he saw the burial cloths, but he did not go in, instead (**John 20:5**), he waited for Peter to arrive, and Peter, impetuous as ever, went right into the tomb.

Jesus body was gone, but the body wrappings were there and the face-cloth was neatly rolled up. Definitely not the work of grave robbers, they would have scattered the burial cloths, or more likely, they would have carried the body out in its wrappings, for easier transport.

John (**John 20:8**) now entered the empty tomb and saw the neatly stowed wrappings, and he believed that the Lord had indeed risen from the grave; although, neither he nor Peter really understood the awesome truth that Christ would rise from the grave.

Luke 24:12 tells us, "Peter saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened [wondering what had happened]."

Read John 20:11-17... We are told that Jesus first appeared to Mary M, although she was not a prominent person among the followers of Christ; just as the woman at the well, in Samaria (cf. **John 4:28-29**), who although unknown to the followers of Christ, was the first person to whom Jesus declared Himself to be the Messiah.

Peter and John had left the tomb to go to their homes, but Mary evidently returned and was just outside the tomb weeping, when she saw two angels near where Jesus' body had been laid (although she just saw them as men, not knowing that they were angels).

They asked her (**verse 13**), "why are you weeping?" She answered them, sharing her concern that her Lord had been taken away and she didn't know where He was. Mary then turned around (we aren't told why), and she saw Jesus standing there, but did not recognize Him. The last time she saw Him, he was the victim of a brutal execution, almost unrecognizable, she did not expect to see Him alive.

Jesus asked her why she was crying, who was she looking for? She thought He was the gardener and so she asked where Jesus' body had been taken, so she could go get His body (perhaps to properly finish the burial preparations).

Mary did not recognize Jesus in His resurrected body, as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't (see **Luke 24:13-16**), and the seven disciples on the Sea of Galilee (see **John 21:1-10**).

In **Verse 16**, Jesus calls, "Mary," and she recognizes it is Jesus (cf. **John 10:27**), "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Mary, responding to the Lord, said "Rabboni!" (Teacher! a form of Rabbi that expresses great honor and reverence (cf. **Mark 10:51**, blind beggar Bartimaeus addresses Jesus)).

Mary holds tight (**John 20:17**), Jesus says, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

Mary did not want Jesus to get away again. We don't know how much of the upper room discourse she was aware of, perhaps the apostles had told her what Jesus had said, that He was going back to the Father and He would send the Holy Spirit, through whom He would come to them (see **John 14:1-3, 6, 16-20; 16:7, 11**).

Jesus tells Mary (**John 20:17**) to go to His "brothers" (His disciples), previously referred to as slaves or friends in **John 15:15**, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

John tells us (**John 20:18**) that Mary M went to the disciples saying, "'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her."

Next Sunday we will finish up **John 20**, where Jesus appears to His disciples, who are hiding in an undisclosed location, most likely afraid that they will be next on the Jews hit list for execution.

As I bring today's lesson to a close, I want to remind you how Jesus calls us His brothers and sisters, no longer slaves or just friends, but family.

The relationship every true Christian has with God the Father, because of Christ the Son, is that of a child with a loving father, as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ the Lord (**John 1:12-13**), "But as many as received Him [Jesus Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God... born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God," (**John 3:3**), "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," (**John 3:6-8**), "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Through the cross of Christ and His resurrection from the grave, we have been adopted as sons of God (**Ephesians 1:5**), "He [God the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself."

How does that happen?

Ephesians 1:13, “after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit.”

1Corinthians 12:12-13, “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized [Gk. *baptizo*, immersed, fully submerged, placed] into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” **27**, “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”

Colossians 1:15-20, “He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

Hebrews 2:11, “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren [His brothers and sisters].”

Galatians 3:26-28, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Pastor Mike

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