

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to the Gospel of John – chapter 20

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through John

And after spending the last couple of weeks on the crucifixion – our text over the next few weeks will take us through the Resurrection and the encounters that Jesus had with certain individuals.

We looked at Nicodemus and Joseph last week as to how they were transformed – and this week, we are going to begin to look at how the lives of disciples and Jesus' followers were transformed as well – and in the process being reminded that the same work continues to be done in our lives.

Let's pray...

Read text -

I want us to try to put ourselves in the sandals of Jesus' disciples

The disciples, the followers of Jesus, have lost their best friend

They lost the One that they completely committed their life to

They are not simply going through the grieving process – they are not going through the process of simply seeing their friend die –

they saw their friend die viscosly,

they saw their friend die tortuously

but in all reality – when the tomb was sealed – in their minds, they lost absolutely everything.

You see, as Jesus was buried – their hope was buried

Their dreams were buried

Jesus was everything to them

These disciples had left their families to follow Jesus

They left their careers to follow Jesus

They left everything to follow the One who they believed was Messiah

In their minds – everything was lost

And even though Jesus taught them – over and over again – that He would die and rise again –

The disciples, as we will see in our text, are still not at that place of full understanding.

They are still struggling to try to grasp – to what just happened

You see loved ones, for us – we know what happens in ch 20 – we know the Good News – we know the end of the story

But sometimes as we study the account of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ – we lose sight of the reality of what Jesus' disciples and Jesus' followers and those that were close to Him were experiencing.

We lose sight of the pain, the grief, the hopelessness that they felt for those three days.

That is why I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired John to focus on certain individuals –

We saw it at the cross with Jesus' mother – as she sees Jesus take His last breath

We saw it our study last week with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus – who were so moved by what Jesus did on the cross –

that their lives were transformed –

that they came out of the shadows to make sure that Jesus' body was cared for properly upon His death

They had counted the cost and were all in

So there is a big contrast between the end of ch 19 – where Jesus' body is wrapped and placed in a tomb and what we have in our text this morning –

Look at verse 1 again,

[Jhn 20:1-10 NKJV] 1 Now on the first [day] of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw [that] the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Now, when we read the other gospels – we are told that there were other women that came to the tomb on Sunday morning –

John only mentions Mary Magdalene because of the story he wants to tell us about her later on in the chapter –

Because Mary Magdalene is going to have an encounter with Jesus - we will get to that portion of the text next week.

And the reason that the encounter is so important is because Mary Magdalene was the first person that Jesus appeared to after His Resurrection.

You see, in our way of thinking – we would have expected Jesus to appear first to Pontius Pilate or Herod or Caiaphas – or maybe even to His disciples

But it was Mary Magdalene –

The same Mary Magdalene that Luke tells us in his gospel that Jesus delivered her from seven demons.

Jesus rescued her

Jesus changed her

Jesus demonstrated His love for her

And in response – Mary Magdalene loved Jesus

The story of Mary Magdalene continues to this day in the lives of every believer.

As Jesus rescued us, changed us and demonstrates His love for us.

God is still delivering today

God is still saving today

God is still pulling people up from deep and dark sins

Like we see in the life of Mary Magdalene

And the reason that I believe that Jesus appeared to her first, is that she was the most devastated by His death.

Remember what Jesus told the Pharisee as they were breaking bread with one another as a sinful woman began washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair.

[Luk 7:47 NKJV] 47 "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which [are] many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, [the same] loves little."

Mary Magdalene loved Jesus much because she was saved from much

So now – let's put ourselves in her sandals –

She is devastated at what happened a few days earlier

She goes to the tomb – it has been a long three days,

She came to pay her respects to the One who forgave her

She came to pay her respect to the One who loved her, to the One that wasn't embarrassed by her and she saw the stone on the front of the tomb had been taken away.

I had you make a note of the word, "saw"

We are going to see this word later on in our text

Because the Greek word that is used here has the idea of a "quick glance"

In fact – it is the same word that Jesus used when He gave the warning -

[Mat 5:28 NKJV] 28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus is saying that even a simple quick glance if it is accompanied by lust – that individual has already committed adultery – staring is not required / gawking is not required – just a quick glance.

So - Mary Magdalene quickly glanced toward the tomb and noticed that the stone had been taken away from the door of the tomb—she concluded that somebody had broken into the tomb and stolen the body of Jesus

By the way – in Matthew’s gospel – he tells us that an angel rolled back the stone from the door

But one thing to remember is that the angel didn’t move the stone to let Jesus out— he moved the stone to allow the disciples to get in and confirm that the tomb was indeed empty!

So Mary assumes that someone broke in and took Jesus body away – adding to her grief.

2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, (pop quiz – who is the disciple whom Jesus loved? John) and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Mary Magdalene runs back and tells Peter and John

Luke tells us in his gospel – that Peter and John did not believe Mary Magdalene

Now – the other Gospels tell us that as the rest of the women lingered at the tomb, two angels appeared to them and informed them of the Resurrection, telling them to go and tell the disciples.

They hurried back into Jerusalem to the place where the disciples were.

And the disciples still did not believe them – their words seemed like idle tales to them.

You see church – what is going on here is a crisis of faith

There is a crisis of having to deal with reality in the midst of grief

Peter and John are discouraged

It is hard to receive good news when we are discouraged

That is what the enemy does –

the enemy likes to keep us in a state of discouragement

the enemy likes to tell us over and over again how much we blew it – that there is no hope – how bad we have it as opposed to other people

we become fixated on the cares and concerns of life

And it is this fixation that discourages us –

Jesus – as He explains the parable of the sower says –

[Luk 8:14 NKJV] 14 "Now the ones [that] fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

Turn your bibles with me to Luke 21

[Luk 21:34-36 NKJV] 34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with **carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."**

We might say that our hearts will never be weighed down by carousing or drunkenness – but certainly our hearts can be weighed down by the cares of this life and that weighing down is what leads to discouragement.

And here is the reason why -

Because in a state of discouragement –

In a state where we are fixated upon the cares of life –

the believer becomes idle –

we lose sight of the good news

Why were the disciples in hiding?

Why did the disciples did not believe Mary and the rest of the women when they came to tell them the good news –

They were discouraged and weighed down by the cares of life – bringing fear to them and keeping them idle.

3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying [there]; yet he did not go in.

So Peter and John take off running to the tomb –

It's a foot race

Peter gets a head start but John, as he points out – is not only the one that Jesus loved – but apparently, he is also a better athlete than Peter.

It could be simply that he was younger than Peter or I even read a few bible theologians that stated that it could be that Peter simply slowed down as he approached the tomb – remember, the last time we saw Peter, prior to this, was when he was denying Jesus three days earlier

So John gets to the tomb before Peter – he sees the open tomb – just like Mary told them and looks into the tomb from the opening – but he doesn't go in.

Remember, he is Jewish – and they are in the midst of a Feast (Feast of Unleavened Bread) – the last thing John wants is to be defiled

And going into a tomb – would certainly defile him from celebrating the Feast.

So, John stayed outside the tomb and simply looked inside—what did he see?

John saw the graveclothes that had held the body of Jesus lying by themselves undisturbed but empty.

And once again, I had you make a note of the word “saw” – because this is the same word that we saw earlier in verse 1 – a quick glance

So initially John just gave the empty tomb a quick glance.

A few minutes pass by -

6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he **saw the linen cloths lying [there], 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.**

When Peter got to the tomb he impulsively charged right into the tomb — just as we would expect him to do!

That is who Peter was –

He ran on impulse

He saw – and I had you make a note of the word saw

Because John uses a different Greek word for “saw”

The word that is used to describe Peter’s saw - “to look carefully, to study and contemplate what you’re looking at”

What was Peter looking so intently at—what did he see in that tomb?

The linen strips that Jesus was wrapped in

The grave clothes were such that they were in the same shape as when they were wrapped around the body.

It was as if the body had simply dissolved out of them.

Remember, Mary went to them – thinking that people had taken Jesus’ body

However, what Peter saw – after contemplating what he was looking at – he knew this wasn’t the work of grave robbers – because they would have taken the body along with the grave clothes and the covering that would have been placed on Jesus’ face

And yet even though Peter carefully examined the scene—he still didn’t understand that Jesus had risen from the dead.

All Peter could conclude was what the evidence didn’t point to

8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.

So here in verse 8, John goes into the tomb – and I had you notice that he saw – this is a totally different word than the other two saws

Just to recap -

In verse 1, Mary saw - Mary had a quick glance of the empty tomb

In verse 5, John saw - John had a quick glance at the linen clothes that were inside the tomb from the mouth of the tomb

In verse 6, Peter saw – Peter went into the tomb and looked closely at the evidence but he was only able to conclude what it wasn't

And here in verse 8 – John saw – this Greek word means “to see and understand, to perceive with intelligent comprehension.”

In other words, “John saw, John understood and John believed.”

John understood that the only way those linen clothes could be left in that condition would be if Jesus passed right through them as He rose from the dead and they fell limp still holding the shape of His body!

You might be asking yourself – what is the big deal with John using these different Greek words for “saw” – what is the point in all of this.

I believe that the Holy Spirit uses the scriptures and these three individuals to remind us that there is a progression of faith in our lives

We go from a place where we are simply glancing or checking it out.

I remember my first boss, Ed Pena – when he shared with me the gospel for the first time, he shared a tract with me – he told me to go home and read.

I went home and glanced at it and threw it in the garbage

We then come to a place where we see and take a closer look at it – we start to examine things

In my life, I went to Ed Pena and began asking him questions about the scriptures, asking him questions about salvation and forgiveness – and he would give me scripture references and then I would go home and look them up.

Then we finally come to a place – like John – where we see and believe –

We come to a place that moves us to action

Coming to believe in Jesus Christ is often a process of the Holy Spirit opening a person's eyes a little at a time until they 'get it!'

In other words, the light goes on, they believe, and receive Jesus as their resurrected Savior— as did Mary and Peter came to do along with John.

Turn with me to Mark 8

I want to provide one more illustration where we see this progression

[Mar 8:22-25 NKJV] 22 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. 23 So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." 25 Then He put [His] hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

Initially what stands out about his miracle of Jesus - is the way He did it.

What did He do?

He spat on His eyes

But when we look closely at the miracle – what do we see?

We see a progression in the eyesight of the blind man

First, he was blind

Then he saw blurry

Then his eyesight was completely restored, he saw everything clearly

It was as if Jesus was working in his life drawing faith out from him

And He does the same thing in each and everyone of our lives

9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

John believed that Jesus had risen from the dead – however, he didn't realize the resurrection was something the Scriptures had foretold.

Even after they encountered the risen Christ, they didn't understand that all that had happened to Him had been a fulfillment of many passages in their Bible.

Jesus Himself walked them through the prophecies of His life, His death, & His resurrection in one of the times He appeared to them.

I asked you to make a note that He must rise again, it didn't say that He will rise again or that He may rise again – but that He must rise again.

And the reason that He must rise again was because God said He would

The disciples are not there yet –

Just like some of us here may not be there yet –

We are seeing, we are grasping but we are not there yet

And the good news is that God is patient with us

He is gracious to us

And He is continuing to do a work in us

He is the author and the finisher of our faith

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

I think we all have something to chew on this morning –

Especially regarding the cares of this world

[1Pe 5:6-7 NKJV] 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

We place them on Him, knowing He loves us, knowing He can take care of the problems and meet our needs.

How do we know this?

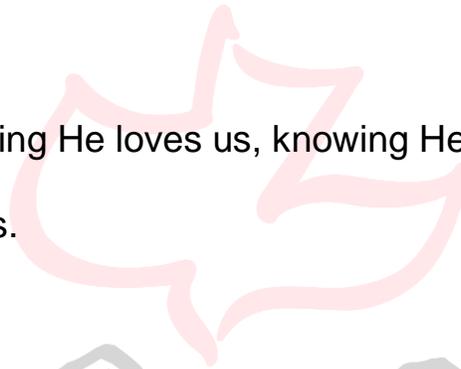
Because His word tells us so.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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