

Easter Sunday morning 2018 at CBC

Sermon outline: John 20.15 'Who is it you are looking for?'

[1] THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

If the events recorded in John 20 did not happen, the Christian message falls.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

14 .. if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

17 ... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. NIV

The resurrection of Jesus is absolutely vital to the Christian message.

[2] THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

[a] eye-witness testimony

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus comes in the first instance from the testimony of eye-witnesses.

*'Mary went .. and **saw**' [1]*

*'John **looked in** at the strips of linen lying there [5]*

*'He **saw** the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.' [6-8]*

*'He **saw** and believed.' [8]*

*'At this, she turned around and **saw** Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.' [14]*

*'**I have seen** the Lord!' [18]*

*'After he said this, **he showed them** his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they **saw** the Lord.' [20]*

*'We have **seen** the Lord!' [25]*

*'Put your finger here, **see** my hands.' [27]*

*'Because you have **seen** me, you have believed.'* [29]

[b] a different day becomes special

All four gospel writers describe the day as being 'the first day of week'. It was the day that we know now as Sunday. And although it is not directly apparent from this chapter, it is a fact that the first followers of Jesus, who were Jewish and who were therefore used to meeting for worship on Saturday, began to gather for worship in the name of Jesus Christ on a Sunday

[c] a lifetime commitment

We are looking only at John 20 this morning. But if we were to do more research, we would easily discover that those encountered the risen Lord Jesus - the original eye-witnesses of whom there are many more than just those mentioned here – took their message to others for the rest of their lives and *never denied the resurrection that they proclaimed*. They were willing to travel many miles to share their message with others.

[3] THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Mary had good reason to think very highly of Jesus. She had at some point in her life become involved with satanic forces, so much so that, as Luke's gospel tells us, Jesus had cast out seven demons from her. She knew Jesus not only as *'the Lord'* (20.2) but as *'my Lord'* (20.13). She is listed in a group of women who gave who supported Jesus financially during his public ministry.

[a] Mary's experience

[i] Mary has no hope

If we put together what she said first of all to Peter and John with what she said to the angelic visitors and to the man she thinks is the gardener, we get:

John 20:2: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" John 20:13:"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him. John 20:15: "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him"

She just wants to know where the body of Jesus is. Her hopes end right there.

[ii] Mary hears a voice

It is as she is looking away from Jesus that she hears a voice. Just the one word – her name. She will never be the same again. For this is a voice she knows, speaking her name as he had done so often. It is Jesus and he is alive!

[iii] Mary has a message

She is to pass the news on – the Lord is continuing his work and although it has not happened yet, he is in the process of returning to his Father, God. His natural habitat is no longer on this earth. Thus, Mary becomes the first person to see the risen Lord Jesus Christ. So, Mary goes from having no hope, to knowing that God is her God and God is her Father, and that, too, would have been a revolutionary thing for any Jewish man to say to any Jewish woman.

But what does this mean for us?

[b] Our experience?

[i] We must look for Jesus in the right place

If we think of him merely as some historical figure, yes, who existed, but who is now dead, we will not find him.

[ii] We must see the purpose of his resurrection

We need to know that when Jesus cried out, 'it is finished' he was announcing that the price he had paid the full price for the sins of his people – all who come to believe in him. And how do we know that the price was acceptable? Had Jesus remained dead, it would have meant that he was no different to the rest of human race. But Jesus had no sins of his own and so took upon himself the sins of others, like us. And the proof that he was an acceptable sacrifice for sins (because a sacrifice has always had to be perfect) was that he could not be claimed by death.

[iii] We must hear the voice of Jesus

Earlier in this gospel John records how Jesus described himself as the good shepherd.

John 10:3-4: The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. See also John 10:14-17.

The other sheep are people like us. And Jesus promised that 'other sheep' would hear his voice and come to him. As the Christian message is explained, publicly and privately, to large crowds or to individuals, the risen Lord Jesus Christ calls people by name. They do not hear a physical voice like Mary did, but nevertheless they know when Jesus calls them, and they respond to his voice. And this process of calling by name happens because Jesus is alive! It could not happen otherwise.

[iv] We must share the message of Jesus

Jesus gave Mary the privilege of sharing the message of his resurrection with others. And if we respond to the voice of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, that privilege is ours too. Just as someone has shared the message with us, we shall seek to share the message with others!