

God Raised Him

EASTER SUNDAY

April 17, 2022

John 20:1-18

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Acts 10:34-43

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”



Welcome to Easter Sunday! Easter, like Christmas, is a day that takes up residence in our consciousness and lives there almost as an entity of itself. And Easter, as wonderful and beautiful as it is, does not encompass all of the life of faith.

There is more to be experienced; there is more to be lived; there is fruit to bear and a journey to undertake. Today we begin a new worship series called “We Are Witnesses.” We will spend the rest of April through the end of May mostly in the book of Acts, both seeing and learning to tell about our faith in Jesus Christ. In



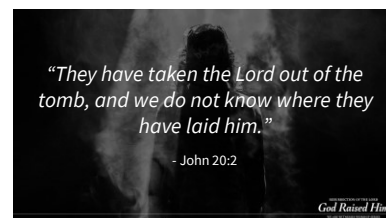
other words, we will explore how we are witnesses and how we are to give witness to our faith. In the Easter story we hear a call to new life and to new living. Part of the greatness of the Easter story is found in the call to live out of our love for our Savior, Jesus Christ. In this sense, even on Easter Sunday, we point towards that future, towards that hope, towards a faith lived out loud in a public way. Here we will connect into Peter’s testimony this morning, helping us to begin to see how we can live our faith out loud in a public way. As we prepare to walk through John 20, our Easter Sunday passage, and Acts 10, our looking forward passage, let us pray...



Please turn with me to John 20 as we begin this time together. Our message today is “God Raised Him.” In our gospel lesson we will hear the story and will look at how

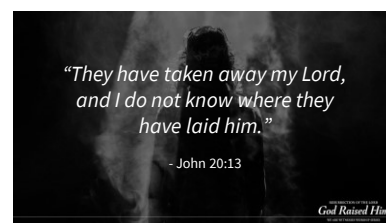
God shared the story of Jesus’ resurrection. The story begins on the first day of the week. For Mary, that would be Sunday. The Sabbath has ended for the Jews and Mary goes to Jesus’ tomb to care for his body. It had been laid there in haste on Friday, late afternoon.

Joseph and Nicodemus had taken Jesus' body down from the cross and quickly laid it in Joseph's own tomb just before sunset and the start of the Sabbath. When Mary arrives the next morning, she sees that the stone covering the entrance to the tomb has been removed. Mary Magdalene is distraught, so she turns to Peter and John, two of Jesus' closest disciples. In verse 2 we see that Mary runs and finds Peter and John. She says to them, *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."* This is a statement that Mary will make over and over, in various ways, in our gospel passage. It expresses her deep desire to care for Jesus' body. At this point it is all that she can still offer to her Lord and Savior.



Peter and John hear this news and race to tomb. There they find the grave clothes – the *"linen wrappings"* – lying there where Jesus' body had been. In verses 9 and 10 we read that Peter and John saw the evidence, but *"as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead."* Puzzled and probably confused, Peter and John return home, leaving Mary standing outside the empty tomb.

Mary stands outside tomb, weeping. Looking into the tomb, Mary sees two angels, dressed in white, sitting where Jesus body had been laid. They ask her what we read as an unusual question. It is asked from a heavenly perspective, from one that understands that Jesus is risen. From this perspective the angels ask, *"Woman, why are you weeping?"* Ummm... Although the words change slightly, Mary expresses the same meaning: *"They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."*



Where have you put my Lord? Even though tears of grief and sorrow pour forth from Mary, she still is focused on why she came to the tomb early this day – to care for the body of her Lord and Savior.

Mary then senses someone behind her. She turns and through her tear-filled eyes, she does not recognize Jesus. He asks her what the angels had asked – *“Woman, why are you crying?”* – and then he adds, *“Whom are you looking for?”* Thinking that Jesus is the gardener, the caretaker, she again inquires about Jesus’ body, keeping her purpose in focus. *“Tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”* Tell me where the body of my Lord and Savior is and I will get the body and care for his body. Just let me do what I came to do! Mary holds to her earthly task, to her earthly perspective.

“Mary!” Jesus speaks her name. *“Mary!”* She responds immediately. Mary exclaims, *“Rabbouni!”* which means ‘teacher’. Mary knows his voice the instant he calls her by name. Before we continue with the story, let us pause for a few seconds to consider this question: When have you heard Jesus' voice calling you by name?



As this new reality – Christ has risen! – settles into Mary, as she shifts to a heavenly perspective, she receives a new focus, a new purpose. Jesus commissions her, saying, *“Go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”* Mary goes to the disciples and announces, *“I have seen the Lord.”* Jesus is alive! He is risen!



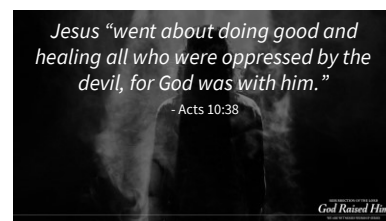
Mary tells the disciples the news; she gives her witness. She tells them all that happened outside the empty tomb.

What a story Mary has to tell about Jesus! God raised him from the dead! Mary's good news sets in motion the beginning of a new reality. Think for a moment what this experience did to her faith. She no longer sees with earthly eyes. Mary will be one of many to encounter the risen Christ. Think about the impact of this new reality on those who witnessed Jesus' resurrection. For many, knowing that Jesus was alive changed their faith and their witness forever.

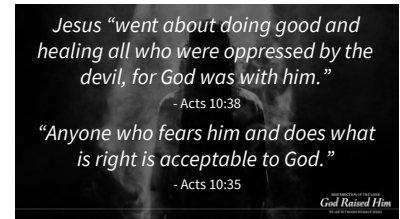


To begin to gain an understanding of how this new reality changed lives, turn with me to Acts 10 where we join Peter, the rock who was to help build Jesus' church. But we also recall that Peter was the one who had stumbled again and again during his three-plus years with Jesus, the one who denied Jesus three times yet was given grace and was extended forgiveness, being empowered to share his faith with the world.

The first few verses in our passage from Acts review the life and ministry of Jesus. Peter reminds his audience that God sent the message to Israel as Jesus came in the flesh and began to share his message after he was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Peter shares that Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit and with power, *"went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."*



Peter sees the vastness of God's love expressed in his experience with Jesus *"healing all who were oppressed"* and in his belief that *"anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to God."* On a side note, here Peter is actually just beginning to wrestle with how big God's circle really is. This is something still being worked out in Peter. We will explore this in greater depth on May 8th as God brings a vision to Peter that really drives home just how big God's circle of love really is.

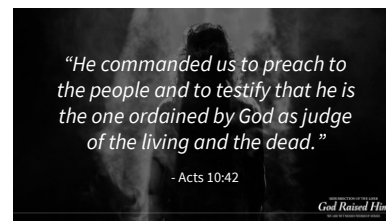


In verse 39 Peter expresses the basis of his belief, saying, *"We are witnesses to all that he did in both Judea and in Jerusalem."* Continuing on, Peter tells the story of Holy Week and Easter, about how the religious leaders put Jesus to death and about how God raised him up on the third day, echoing the words we read in John's gospel.



And then, in verse 40 Peter begins to give his personal witness, his *'how Jesus changed my life'* story. Now, Jesus had changed Peter plenty during his three-plus years of ministry on earth. Yes, Peter was a follower of Jesus, but like Mary before she met the risen Christ, Peter was still somewhat limited by his earthly perspective. What he would become and what he would be for the church was just starting to form in him. That moment at the empty tomb, when he went inside and saw the grave clothes lying where a body had once been – that moment was the beginning of a whole new reality, of a new depth of faith and belief for Peter. Like you and me, Peter still had a lot of growing to do.

In verse 40 we read about the beginning of his new growth as Jesus appeared and ate and drink with Peter and others who were “*chosen by God as witnesses*”. It makes a difference hearing that we are chosen. In verse 42 we hear Peter’s commissioning, told in his own words: “*He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.*” Peter is empowered to first share that Jesus Christ is the one who will judge all people one day. All people will one day stand before the judgment seat. Peter speaks these words not as one being judgmental about others – about who goes to heaven and who goes to hell – but as one who knows what it means, what it feels like, why it matters to be forgiven, to be restored, to redeemed. Yes, God ordained Jesus as the one who will judge. This is true.



Peter witnesses from the understanding that Jesus is also as the one who offers grace and mercy, forgiveness and restoration. Peter saw firsthand how, by walking this earth, by living in human form, Jesus came to know our struggles, our trials, our temptations. Because he knew and experienced them, Jesus is on our side. In the heavenly realms Jesus intercedes for us, pleads for us, prays for us – because he knows what we face, what we go through. And even more, the perfect one, the one who was without sin, Jesus loved us so deeply that he went to the cross and took our sins upon himself. Loaded with the sins of the world, Jesus gave his life as our atoning sacrifice. Shedding his blood for our sins, Jesus paid the price for you and for me. In doing so, Jesus defeated the power of sin. If the story ended there, it would be a wonderful gift that Jesus offers to you and to me.

Turning to the last verse, to verse 43, Peter addresses this gift that he received and that he wants others to receive. In this verse we read, *“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”* This man, this one that God raised up from the grave, this Jesus, he offers forgiveness of sins to all who believe in him as Lord and Savior.



As I just said, the story does not end there. Jesus did not remain in the grave. As we heard in our lesson from John's gospel, God raised Jesus from the grave, defeating the power of death. Because Jesus walked out of the grave, death no longer has the last word. Because Christ was resurrected, we too can know and one day claim eternal life. Peter received forgiveness and wants to share this good news with all people. God raised Jesus from the grave. Because Jesus lives, we can also live. Thanks be to God! Amen and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) *Grow*. How has Jesus called you by name today? What response will lead to growth in your faith in the risen Christ?
- 2) *Pray*. So big is God's circle of love! Who are you having trouble seeing inside that circle? Pray for God to open your heart to the vastness of God's love.
- 3) *Study*. Read Acts 10:44-48. How does this passage speak into your response and prayer to the “Pray” question and prompt?