

05

JOHN 20:1-17

THE EMPTY TOMB

THIS WEEK'S **focus**

When someone we don't recognize greets us by name, it can be startling. We might wonder how that person knows us. Have we met him and just forgotten? Does she maybe know us because of our parents or other friends? It can even be embarrassing, especially if we recognize the person but simply can't remember her or his name. In today's session, Mary Magdalene meets some mysterious people at Jesus's tomb. She was expecting to find Jesus's body, but instead she finds two men in white, and then a man who she assumes is the gardener. Imagine how surprised she was when she learned the man's true identity—it was Jesus! Jesus offers salvation to all who believe in Him—but we need to recognize Him first.



CENTRAL **truth**

Jesus offers salvation to all who believe in Him.



EXPLORE

scripture

JOHN 20:1-17

JOHN 20:1-2

1 On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. **2** So she went running to

Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, “They’ve taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him!”

JOHN 20:3-10

3 At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. **4** The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. **5** Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. **6** Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. **7** The wrapping that

had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. **8** The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and believed. **9** For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. **10** Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

JOHN 20:11-17

11 But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. **12** She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus’s body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. **13** They said to her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “Because they’ve taken away my Lord,” she told them, “and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” **14** Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. **15** “Woman,” Jesus said to her, “why are you crying? Who is it

that you’re seeking?” Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you’ve carried him away, tell me where you’ve put him, and I will take him away.” **16** Jesus said to her, “Mary.” Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” — which means “Teacher.” **17** “Don’t cling to me,” Jesus told her, “since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

05

JOHN 20:1-17
CONVERSATION

questions

▶ READ JOHN 20:1-2.

.01 What thoughts and emotions do you think Mary experienced that morning as she approached and saw the empty tomb?

.02 After His resurrection, Jesus apparently could move through locked doors! (See John 20:26.) So what was the point of rolling the stone away?

.03 How can we make Jesus a priority in our lives, like Mary did?



CONTEXT

Jesus frequently pointed out how the Old Testament foretold His resurrection (see Matt. 12:40; 16:21; Mark 8:31). However, for the disciples, this was still a mysterious teaching. Did the Old Testament really predict the Messiah's death and resurrection? From the beginning, God had promised that a future descendent of Adam and Eve would deal a fatal blow to Satan. But the enemy would also strike that future descendent (see Gen. 3:15). As the Old Testament authors wrote about the hope of Israel and all humanity, it was clear that the victory of the Messiah (see Jer. 23:5-6; Ps. 22:1-31; Dan. 7:13-14) would be preceded by His suffering (see Isa. 53:4-12; Zech. 12:10). Jesus saw Himself and His work as the center of Scripture's teachings (see John 5:39). Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, assure us of God's faithfulness and the truth of Scripture (see 1 Cor. 15:3-5).

▶ READ JOHN 20:3-10.

.04 Jesus had told His disciples this would happen. So why do you think they were confused about where His body was?

.05 What can the reactions of the disciples teach us about what we should do when we are faced with biblical truths we don't understand?

.06 What was the evidence that convinced John of the truth of Jesus's resurrection? How do you think you would have responded?

▶ READ JOHN 20:11-17.

.07 What are some reasons we might struggle to believe in the resurrection? What evidence does John give us?

.08 How has Jesus used other people in your life to give you a better understanding of who He is?



HISTORY

How do we know that the disciples didn't simply see Jesus's ghost? For one thing, Jesus's disciples couldn't locate His body (see John 20:1-10). Then, between Jesus's resurrection and His ascension, He appeared to His disciples in tangible ways: He was able to both be touched (see John 20:26-27; Luke 24:39-40) and to eat with His followers (see John 21:12; Luke 24:30,41-43). Jesus's physical resurrection is an important source of hope for our future (see 1 Cor. 15:12-28). The physical world God created wasn't spared when sin came on the scene, and it awaits restoration too. God cares about the sickness, disease, and pain we experience. Jesus's resurrection assures us that not only are we forgiven, but one day, God will restore everything in creation that has been broken, both spiritually and physically.

05

JOHN 20:1-17
NOW
what?



CENTRAL truth

Jesus offers salvation to all who believe in Him.

.09 Why do you think the resurrection was important? How did it change the world? How can it change us?

.10 Mary was eager to announce Jesus's resurrection. What hurdles do we sometimes face in sharing the gospel?

.11 How should the reality of Jesus's resurrection shape the way we live?

.12 Are you convinced of the truth of Jesus's resurrection? If so, what evidence convinced you? If not, what questions do you have?

DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE JOHN 20:8

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

JOHN 19:38-42

DWELL

Just imagine the heaviness of this moment. Those who loved and followed Jesus had just watched Him die. His body was then prepared for burial, placed in a tomb, and sealed away with a large stone. For His followers, this was heartbreaking. They didn't have the vantage point that we do today—all they knew was that Jesus, their friend and teacher, had died. However, as we know today, the grave didn't have the final word. Jesus's resurrection ensures that all who believe in Him can find new life.

← How do you think Jesus's original followers would have reacted to the news of His death?

↓ What do these verses reveal about Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus?

MEMORIZE

Write John 20:8 on an index card or sticky note and attach it to your bathroom mirror. Say the verse aloud each day, emphasizing a few different words each time.

PRAY

If you have doubts about the events of the crucifixion, pray and ask God to show you the truth of His Word and what it reveals about Jesus's sacrifice for you.

day 2

JOHN 20:1-2

DWELL

Mary Magdalene was one of the first people to discover the empty tomb (see also Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). Imagine her surprise when, after having seen Jesus sealed in the tomb, she found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty! Believing her Master was missing, she ran and told Peter and John (who refers to himself in the book of John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”) The truth is: Jesus rose from the dead!

← What was Mary’s conclusion when she found the tomb empty? Why do you think this is the conclusion she came to?

→ Who can you run to when you have a spiritual question or spiritual need?

MEMORIZE

Save John 20:8 as a wallpaper or screensaver on your phone or computer. Read it aloud each time you see it.

PRAY

Thank God for His patience when we experience doubt. Ask Him to extend grace and bring clarity and assurance where doubt may linger.

day 3

JOHN 20:3-10

DWELL

Seeing doesn’t always result in immediate belief. Jesus had told the disciples throughout His ministry that He would be killed and then rise from the dead. Yet they never fully understood what He was telling them. Now, standing there inside the empty tomb, it still didn’t completely click. According to John 20:9, the disciples didn’t fully understand what Jesus meant when He talked about rising from the dead. That’s the way we are a lot of the time. We need to have an experience with Jesus to really grasp the truth of what He says.

↻ What evidence in these verses point to Jesus’s resurrection?

↑ How do these verses indicate God’s power over death?

MEMORIZE

Say the book, chapter, and verse number for John 20:8 out loud several times. Then read aloud just the first few words of the verse. Do this a few times a day and see if you can memorize more each time.

PRAY

Take a few minutes to thank Jesus for rising from the grave so that we can experience new life in Him through faith.



day 4

JOHN 20:11-13

DWELL

On Sunday morning, while she was at the tomb weeping, Mary was met by angels who offered her words of comfort. Observing an empty tomb, her fear was that Jesus's body had been stolen. She saw with her eyes that He was gone but couldn't wrap her mind around the situation. Our ability to feel strong emotions is a good gift from God, but sometimes those same emotions can prevent us from seeing what Jesus is doing around us.

↑ What do these verses indicate about God's power over life and death?

↪ What is the difference between physical and spiritual sight?

MEMORIZE

Write out John 20:8 on a piece of paper. Circle three to five key words in the verse and consider their importance. Focus on those words and see how much of the verse you can speak from memory.

PRAY

Thank God for the times when He has met you during a time of need or grief. If you are in one of those seasons right now, ask God to remind you of His peace and presence.

day 5

JOHN 20:14-17

DWELL

Turning to leave the tomb, Mary was met by Jesus. However, she didn't recognize Him—she thought He was the gardener coming to care for the tomb. But when He spoke Mary's name, that's when she recognized Jesus. This was a personal interaction. Just as Jesus called her name, He calls out to us and invites us to place our trust in Him and what He has accomplished.

← How was Mary's encounter with Jesus good news for the disciples?

↪ What can you do to be more conscious of Jesus's presence each day?

MEMORIZE

Read John 20:8 several times. Then start by trying to memorize the first two or three words. Once you have those words memorized, add a few more words at a time until you can say the whole verse.

PRAY

Thank God for the invitation to be a part of His family through Jesus's resurrection. Ask Him for opportunities to share this good news with others.

