Week 30, John 20:1–18

Hook

Main Point: Jesus is the one who rose.
Main Application: Discover comfort and victory in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Discussion Question:
Have you ever bought something and later found out it was too good to be true?
Have you ever made a purchase and regretted it due to poor quality?

Current Event: The phrase “if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is” helps to put a dose of cynicism in someone’s vision. Several products through the years have made claims that they could not deliver on. For instance, the QRay bracelet is a metal band that is meant to promote well-being. The claim made was that the piece of metal would provide immediate and significant pain relief from arthritis and other chronic conditions. After time in court, in 2008 the company that produced QRay bracelets was ruled against to the tune of $87 million; 248,931 refund checks were issued to consumers who were misled by the product.¹

¹ www.qray.com/?source=Google&gclid=CM-CnbrDh8ICFQupaQodSJQAgA
John 20:1–18

Book

Main Point: Jesus is the one who rose.
Main Application: Discover comfort and victory in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Text Summary: Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb and finds that the stone has been rolled away. She runs to get Peter and “the disciple Jesus loved,” presumably John. John and Peter run to the empty tomb and find the cloth folded up that Jesus was covered in when He was placed in the tomb. The unnamed disciple, upon seeing the folded cloth, believes. Mary remains at Jesus’ tomb weeping while the disciples head back to their homes. While there, Mary is confronted by two angels who are in Jesus’ tomb. After being confronted by the angels, Jesus appears and asks Mary why she weeps. While at first, Mary believes Jesus to be the gardener, He soon calls her by name and she realizes that her Lord stands before her. He tells her not to embrace Him, not to cling to Him, but to go and tell the disciples He will soon be ascending to the Father.

John 20:1–10 (Read)
Sub Application: Believe without seeing.

Mary discovers the stone in front of the tomb had been removed. She brings Peter and the other disciple to the empty tomb. Mary notices the stone has been rolled away, and she panics. She runs to gather Peter and the beloved disciple, who most likely is John the apostle. At this point, Mary believes that Jesus’ body had been stolen. It’s not out of place, as this actually was quite common. “The robbing of graves was a crime sufficiently common that the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54) eventually ordered capital punishment to be meted out to those convicted of destroying tombs, removing bodies or even displacing the sealing stones.”

Look carefully at Mary’s statement in verse 2. She explains to Peter that she does not know where the robbers might have lain Jesus. This statement is quite telling. This “indicates that the early Christians had no sense that the tomb would have been empty.... The only possibility that crossed Mary’s mind was that the body must have been stolen in clear violation of Jewish burial integrity and of Roman practice.” Mary, someone who had been close with Jesus, clearly wasn’t expecting a resurrection.

When Peter and the other disciple get there, they notice the linen cloths lying in the tomb, without a body. The cloths in the tomb “were sufficient evidence that the body had not simply

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been moved. Moreover, grave robbers certainly would not have left behind expensive linen wrappings or spices.”

Peter walks in and sees the face cloth folded, set aside from the linen cloths in its own place, verse 7 tells us. After Peter enters, the other disciple proceeds to go inside the tomb. What’s interesting is that Peter arrives second but goes in first. What was the other disciple doing? Why not enter into the tomb?

There’s some processing going on here. Verse 8 tells us that this disciple finally steps into the tomb, sees the cloths and the absence of Jesus’ body, and he believes. His delayed entrance could have been caused by him wrestling with what exactly was happening. Did Jesus truly rise from the grave? If so, what does this mean? His mind races back through Jesus’ teachings and all the allusions He gave to this moment. It all was coming together now. This was the plan all along.

Here, this disciple comes to faith before he even sees Jesus’ body alive. “And he took this step, not simply because the tomb was empty, but because the grave-clothes were still there.” This is amazing when compared to the conversions that have happened throughout John’s gospel. So many believed on Jesus after they saw signs and wonders. They believed after they saw, not the other way around. Therefore, this “certainly marks an example of the fact that the beloved disciple is a symbol of those who at this stage had not seen an appearance of the risen Lord and yet believed.”

But notice in verse 9 that they still remain cloudy on the connection with Jesus’ Resurrection and the Scriptures. They don’t understand the why and the how. They don’t get how this makes sense from the Scripture.

Why did Mary think someone had stolen Jesus’ body?

Why is the beloved disciple’s belief on Jesus significant?

Why is understanding the Scripture important? Can you think of passages in the Old Testament that foretell Jesus’ Resurrection?

What was the unknown disciple’s faith based on?

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John 20:11–18 (Read)

Sub Application: Cry out to the Lord in times of trouble, knowing Jesus is present in times of grief to comfort us.

Mary weeps over Jesus. She is met by two angels and then the Lord himself. In verse 10, we know the disciples went back home after being at the tomb. But Mary stayed. What the “other disciple” saw and believed back in verse 9 is not the same conclusion that Mary has come to. She is still weeping, for she still holds the belief that something has been done with Jesus’ body. She hasn’t come to the belief that Jesus is, in fact, alive. The conclusion of a stolen body is the only one she can fathom.

But as Mary enters the tomb, she is met by two angels. They ask her why she is weeping and this isn’t because they don’t know. The angels ask Mary this question to steer her in another direction. In verse 13, “This question constitutes a call for Mary to set aside her anguish and recognize the reality of Jesus’ return to life.”

The angels want Mary to understand that Jesus is alive and that His body has not been taken. Not only did no one come and take Jesus, death did not take Him. But in verse 14, Jesus appears before Mary and she still is unaware it is He.

Jesus asks her the same question the angels did. He wants to know why she is crying, even as He stands before her. He goes a step further to ask Mary whom she seeks. But Mary, still in her saddened state, doesn’t recognize Jesus, and asks further questions that may lead to answers concerning Jesus’ location. Maybe this man knows something Mary doesn’t? Maybe he was here when the body was taken? For Mary, “[perhaps] she told herself, he had seen something — indeed, perhaps he had been involved in the moving of the body himself. If Mary thought him to be the gardener, she may have wondered if he had been under orders from the owner to remove the body of this executed criminal from the new tomb where it had been hurriedly placed.”

Nothing has removed Mary’s doubt up to this point; “[neither] the removal of the stone, nor the angels inside the tomb, nor even the risen Jesus himself fail to remove it.”

But then Jesus speaks her name, and it’s then that she knows that it is her Lord. She is

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explaining herself, more than likely through tears and in desperation. She is asking for anything, any information. As Jesus listens, He says one word, her name. He calms her with this and lifts the haze of confusion and panic from her. Jesus, the good shepherd, “‘calls his own sheep by name ... and his sheep follow him because they know his voice’ (10:3-4). Anguish and despair are instantly swallowed up by astonishment and delight.”

Mary, in her excitement, tries to embrace Jesus. But He says no. She is overcome by finding what she lost and the comfort that His presence brings. But things aren’t back the way they used to be. Jesus is on His way to the Father. He isn’t staying. His return is not return for good, but for fulfillment of the Scriptures and to bring those to believe in His kingdom and His kingship.

Jesus tells Mary to run and tell the disciples. Tell them that the time has come. Jesus’ words communicate a relationship between Him and the disciples. There is a union He expresses when He says in verse 17, “my Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

What keeps Mary from reaching the same conclusion as “the other disciple” from verse 8?

What keeps Mary from realizing it was Jesus when she saw Him?

Why did Mary think the gardener might have information concerning Jesus’ location?

Why doesn’t Jesus simply appear to everyone so that they might believe in Him?

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Week 30, John 20:1–18

Took

Main Point: Jesus is the one who rose.
Main Application: Discover comfort and victory in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Current Event: Some things that sound too good to be true are actually genuine. According to the CDC, around 35,000 people became disabled due to polio in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1938, President Roosevelt (a victim of polio) founded an organization that would become the March of Dimes to fight the disease. Two vaccines would be championed. People had been without hope, and then came relief in a simple vaccination. The vaccines were effective, and in 1979 the virus was declared eradicated in the U.S.¹¹

Discussion:

Have you ever had a problem and the solution that worked was seemingly too good to be true?

Would you describe our culture in the U.S. as skeptical? Why? Where do you think that comes from?

What would you share with a non-believer who claims that Jesus’ Resurrection is too good to be true?

Lesson Conclusion: Jesus has risen from the dead. Unlike other instances we encounter in the Gospel of John in which people demand a sign, the “other disciple” sees the empty tomb, the discarded linens, and believes. Mary, in her sorrow, stands and weeps at the tomb. In her desperation, not only do angels appear, but the risen Lord himself. Jesus knows Mary’s name and He speaks it.

**Challenge:** Christ has risen! The bonds of death could not hold Jesus. Challenge your class to read John 20:1–18 again this week and picture what the experience must have been like for Peter and the other disciple. Challenge them to reflect on the miracle that took place, to reflect on what God had done. Read Hebrews 11:1 out loud to the class and discuss how the “other disciple” reacted to the empty tomb. Challenge them to remain confident of the unseen during times of struggle. Christ has risen from the dead and because of Him, the believer has victory. Finally, remind your class of the significance of Jesus’ interaction with Mary. Jesus saw her, took time to spend with her, and called her by name. In our sorrows, we are never alone. In our sorrows, we know that this world is not the end. Death, where is your victory?