

The Point: New life is possible when we trust in the risen Christ.

The Passages: John 20: 3-9, 19-23, 27-29

This story NEVER gets old, does it?? I can read and study it over and over, and it still gives me “goosebumps” when I read it! Jesus was crucified on late Friday, and the Sabbath was fast approaching. His followers quickly tended to His body and left him in the tomb. They would finish the job later. But what the women saw and reported on Sunday morning rocked their world—and ours—when they discovered an empty tomb. The foundations of the world have been shaking ever since! The women rushed to share their discovery with the disciples who were gathered together mourning the death of their beloved Jesus.

John 20: 3-9

³⁻⁹ Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb. They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter. Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there, and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself. Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed. No one yet knew from the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

When Jesus was arrested, his followers fled. John later followed to His trial and to the cross. Peter watched from a distance. They remained in hiding in the wake of His death and burial. When they received the news from the women, Peter and the “other disciple” (John, who never referred to himself by name in his gospel) ran together to the tomb. Somewhere along the way, the younger John pulled ahead and arrived first. He stood outside the tomb, and peered inside, just as Mary Magdalene had done before him. It is important to note that the tomb was “open,” the massive stone which had sealed was rolled away. The stone was NOT rolled away to let Jesus out. As noted in later passages, Jesus was able to pass through solid objects, such as locked doors! The tomb was open so that outsiders could enter the tomb to testify of a risen Savior. Now picture the impetuous Peter arriving at the tomb, probably out of breath, heart racing! As was his nature, he immediately barged straightway into the empty tomb. There he found the body wrappings and shrouds that had been so carefully applied the previous evening in neat stacks. This may seem odd information to provide – but John stated this as proof that Jesus was indeed resurrected. If his body had been stolen, the perpetrators would not have removed the wrappings from a dead body before removing it. On the other hand, if Jesus had not actually been dead, but merely fainted and revived in the cool tomb, He would have unwrapped Himself hastily and thrown the linens aside in His anxious escape. John followed Peter into the space and noted the placement of the burial linens. He states that he believed, even if he did not fully understand with the faith that would grow in the coming hours and days.

John 20: 19-23

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” Then he showed them his hands and side.²⁰⁻

²¹ The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were awestruck. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.”²²⁻²³ Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said. “If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

Again, we find a group of the disciples gathered together on Sunday evening, probably with other followers of Jesus, as they mulled over the revelations of the past hours. John emphasized that they kept the doors locked, still fearful of repercussions from Jesus' enemies. They knew that they were on the "most wanted list" of the Romans. The missing body of Jesus did not ease their fears, as their own religious rulers were anxious to implicate them in the disappearance of the body. When they least expected it, Jesus suddenly appeared before them. In a closed locked room, He was mysteriously right there among them!!! He expressed peace to them – and they certainly needed it as their fears must have been overwhelming. Jesus made it clear that he was not a ghost, and He shared food with them. The reunion with the disciples was meaningful, but it was only part of the story. He gave them a responsibility to continue what He had started. He breathed on them and commanded them to receive the Holy Spirit.

John 20: 27-29

²⁷ Then he focused his attention on Thomas. "Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don't be unbelieving. Believe."²⁸ Thomas said, "My Master! My God!"²⁹ Jesus said, "So, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing."

Thomas was notably absent from the gathering when Jesus appeared. When the other disciples related their experience, he doubted their testimony since he had not seen it with his own eyes. A week later, he got his chance! Jesus appeared once again to the disciples as they gathered, and this time, Thomas was there. Jesus approached Thomas directly and provided him with the physical evidence of His resurrection. Thomas' reaction was immediate as he recognized the truth and was commanded by his Savior to have faith and believe. His words, "My Master! My God!" are the pinnacle point to John's gospel emphasis of Jesus as the Messiah. Will those be our words when we see the Master face-to-face? For Jesus spoke to us when He stated to Thomas that those who have not seen and yet believe will be blessed.

John's Gospel account did not quite end with these verses in our study today. He went on to tell readers that Jesus had done MUCH more than any single book could contain. Each act recorded by John of the teaching and healing by Jesus was provided to verify what John wanted readers to understand more than anything. And by believing in Him even when we haven't seen Him, we can have eternal life. Salvation is only a beginning point for our Christian life. The abundance is just starting for us – because Jesus rose from the dead.

**HE LIVES, HE LIVES! CHRIST JESUS LIVES TODAY.
HE WALKS WITH ME AND TALKS WITH ME, ALONG LIFE'S NARROW WAY.
HE LIVES, HE LIVES! SALVATION TO IMPART.
YOU ASK ME HOW I KNOW HE LIVES—HE LIVES WITHIN MY HEART!**