

“We have seen the Lord”

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[0 : 0 0] about a guy called Paul who he was asked by some neighbors to look after their pets while they went on holiday and he has a dog himself and thought well that's straightforward so I'll do that and Paul went to the house on the first day of the holiday and he thought I'll do the indoor pets first and so he arrived with his dog and let his dog go and he was feeding the fish and his dog came back in with the rabbit in his mouth and the rabbit was dead so Paul didn't know what to do but he realized because it was the start of the week thankfully he still had a week to sort the situation out so he checked the rabbit was a male rabbit and checked what it looked like and thought well I can find a replacement so went to several pet shops looking for a rabbit that would just look look just like the one that the dog had brought in and eventually found one and put it in the hutch and all seemed fine and he got a call on the the day that um the family got back in and the phone rang

Paul thanks for looking after the pets while we're away we just wanted to ask about the rabbit he says what do you mean and they said well it's just that Sooty actually died the night before we left for holiday and uh we buried him in the garden and um we're now trying to explain to our children how it is that we've come back off holiday and Sooty is alive and well in the hutch again so I guess you know for those children uh the the obvious problem was when once a rabbit dies you don't see it alive again I guess I just wonder whether sometimes we come to Easter Sunday and instinctively we have the same problem can we really accept that Jesus having died was alive again it's not what normally happens and that's why we need John's gospel we're going to look at John's two facts and Mary's two mistakes so first of all John's two facts that show us Easter is real if you don't know John's gospel very well what we're dealing with here is an eyewitness account of Jesus life by one of his closest friends and followers and he doesn't expect us to accept who Jesus is by simply a leap into the unknown a leap into a leap of faith instead John insists that we we should believe because of the evidence that he's setting out in his gospel that's why he's written it and he shows us that just later in John 20 if you just have a look with me at verses 30 and 31 he says Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name

Jesus had promised that he'd come so that if you believe in him that is if you trust him lean your weight on him and you can have true life the true life of knowing God a life that lasts forever the life that God made us for and John has set out these signs this evidence so that we can believe and have that life for ourselves so John was meticulous in the way that he records the death of Jesus saying in chapter 19 verse 34 just before the bit we had read about what happened that good Friday verse 34 that one of the soldiers pierced Jesus aside with a spear bringing this flow of blood and clear liquid out of the body to confirm that he was dead and then verse 35 you can see what John's doing verse 35 the man who saw it has given testimony and his testimony is true he knows that he tells the truth and he testifies that you also may believe we can accept that Jesus was definitely dead and John records very carefully that Jesus was buried and people knew where he was buried and these two prominent men Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus laid the body in this tomb but then we get our first fact this morning and it's the empty tomb have a look with me at verse 1 of chapter 20 early on the first day of the week while it was still dark Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance so she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciples the one the one whom Jesus loved and said they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him now just pause there that is bizarre it is bizarre here's why Jesus predicted again and again that he would rise again after he died Mark chapter 8 the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders chief priests and teachers of the law and he must be killed and after three days rise again this is Mark 9 the son of

man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men they will kill him and after three days he will rise Mark chapter 10 we're going up to Jerusalem and the son of man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law they will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him and spit on him flog him and kill him three days later he will rise Mary goes to the tomb the stone has been rolled away she doesn't go in she runs back she says to the disciples the tomb's empty and nobody says hang on a minute it's the third day what does that show us it shows us that for these people a resurrection of Jesus on the third day was completely beyond their imaginings they just didn't even hear the words go in as Jesus predicted it because it was just not not not even close to their worldview and that's really significant for us today C.S. Lewis used to talk about how we have this chronological snobbery we look back at people in history and we kind of think they just weren't as clever as us back then we're just so much cleverer now and we sort of think we know so much more now we've got science now they didn't have science then and so they were just gullible and of course they would have believed the resurrection but we know now it couldn't have happened well Mary's reaction to the empty tomb demonstrates very clearly for us that they had enormous barriers to believing that Jesus would rise again the Greeks for the Greeks the idea that the body which was an evil thing would rise with the spirit of someone just they couldn't they would never have been able to fathom the Jews they believed in a resurrection but it was a resurrection at the end of the world that's when people will rise from death for somebody to rise again Jesus to rise again and the world not to end just they just couldn't imagine it so the point is we've got barriers today to believing that Jesus rose from the dead but the barriers that they had to believe that Jesus rose from the dead were just as strong and something broke through those barriers for them I guess it's worth thinking isn't it for my friends perhaps who don't believe Jesus rose from the dead what would it take with their worldview to accept that someone had risen from the dead maybe they'd have to have such strong evidence he'd have to have been seen multiple times and you know that's exactly what happened because it had to persuade these people then and it was beyond their worldview to accept it so Mary sees the empty tomb and despite the predictions she thinks somebody's stolen the body but still for us the empty tomb is a key fact it's a key limb of evidence for us so look what happens to John and Peter as they run to the tomb John's got the fitness edge hasn't he he's there first but he's more cautious verse four both were running but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first he bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in then Simon Peter who was behind him arrived and went in to the tomb he saw the strips of linen lying there as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus head and look at the eyewitness detail here from John the cloth was folded up by itself separated from the linen finally the other disciple who would reach the tomb first also went inside and this is key he saw and believed I still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead John believes because of what he sees in the empty tomb he knows it can't be a grave robbery the only thing of value is still there his worldview has been exploded he believes Jesus is alive again and the empty tomb speaks to us from history today because it's still empty nobody ever produced a body and all that anyone had to do to squash this outrageous claim that the disciples were making that Jesus was alive again all they had to do was produce the body but they never did because the body has gone it's a key fact but Mary and the other disciples they needed this second fact and that's the resurrection appearances so they start with Mary and we'll come back to Mary in a moment but in verse 18 you can see Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news I have seen the Lord it's the women who saw Jesus first and again it's one of those moments in the resurrection accounts where they have the ring of truth about them because it's very embarrassing for the disciples that it was the women who saw Jesus first the women's testimony wasn't accepted as credible back in those days in the ancient near east and so if you were making this up it would have been men but it God really chose a woman to see Jesus first and to break the news and that's a wonderful thing and if the men were wrong to doubt her testimony it doesn't take long for them to have things confirmed with their own eyes verse 19 on the evening of that first day of the week when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you after he said this he showed them his hands and sighed the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord and that joy has to be explained today when you read John's gospel you realize that for John Jesus dying on the cross is absolutely critical and his whole gospel is kind of leading up to this death on the cross but John but the death of Jesus didn't produce faith it left the disciples

scattered in unbelief and then again and again in this chapter John 20 we hear about what they saw on the third day the empty tomb the grave clothes Jesus alive again at least 11 times after Jesus died he was seen alive again by his followers at one occasion up to other 500 people these were witnesses willing to die for their claim that Jesus was alive again as though they had no fear of death anymore in fact the historian CFC Mule has said that if you are going to deny the physical resurrection of Jesus from death you do have a resurrection shaped hole in history that you have to fill with something to explain how this band of scattered desperate people people cowering in fear became evangelists who burst out across the Roman Empire with their testimony that they'd seen Jesus alive again it's a resurrection or it's a resurrection shaped hole in history that you have to fill with something so maybe for any of us this morning Christian not yet Christian maybe you're questioning your faith maybe thinking

[12 : 22] Jesus demands that I live wholeheartedly for him is it really true well don't hide from those questions because it is true go back again and look at this evidence I remember sitting having lunch with a guy who's quite a young Christian he was an older Christian I said to him do you ever have doubts yourself in your Christian life and he said yeah I do have doubts but I am convinced by the resurrection I have to go back there Jesus rose from the dead that's what keeps me going it's worth being wholehearted as a Christian because it's true and you'll meet people in Glasgow today who will say whatever you choose to believe if it works for you that is true for you well Christianity says the opposite it says this works for you because it's true don't become a Christian because you need a purpose in your life although it will give you purpose in your life don't become a Christian because it sounds exciting though it is exciting to be a Christian no come because it's true and that's why it gives you purpose and that's why it's exciting because it really is true that Jesus rose from the dead that's our first point

John's two facts that shows Easter is real but now we go from the objective to the subjective Mary's two mistakes that show us Easter is personal Mary's not a rabbi she's not a respectable woman she's not even respectable for we know that she was demon possessed Jesus had driven seven evil spirits out of her God chooses that woman by his grace to be the first to see her Lord alive again and she makes these two mistakes that we can learn from to show us that the resurrection can make a difference to every moment of our lives today the first is that we find her wailing back at the tomb in verse 10 then the disciples went back to their homes but Mary stood outside the tomb crying as she wept she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been one at the head and the other at the foot they asked her woman why are you crying they have taken my Lord away she said and I don't know where they have put him at this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there but she did not realise that it was Jesus same question woman he said why are you crying who is it you're looking for thinking he was the gardener she said sir if you have carried him away tell me where you've put him and I will get him why is Mary distraught she weeps because she's seen the brutality of humanity at its worst the mocking of Jesus the beating of him as he was then butchered on the cross and now she thinks they've stolen the body just as we might weep today when we see brutality today when we see children losing their parents in bomb attacks in Brussels we weep as Mary wept she weeps because she's unable to anoint

Jesus' body and it's her way of saying goodbye to him just as we weep today over the death of friends and family who leave us behind with a separation that we can't bridge she weeps because she's alone just as many of us feel alone in the world today but above all she weeps because she thinks she's lost her saviour Jesus was the one who'd rescued this woman and she thinks he's gone forever so today let me ask why do you weep?

what makes you weep? do you weep over evil in our world? over death? over your own sin? well then we need to hear what Mary had to understand through her tears there's a great quote about this passage by a guy in the 19th century actually where he said that Mary is weeping and all along she has no idea that she has two angels right behind her and Jesus right in front of her she hasn't realised verse 16 Jesus said to her Mary she turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic Rabboni which means teacher she has to realise she has to realise no matter what she's going through angels behind her her saviour Jesus right in front of her and friends it's true for us today as well for Jesus is alive and the world is still utterly broken and we're all too aware of that but one of our biggest problems is that we fail to recognise that Jesus is in this with us he never leaves your side his work on the cross has smashed death to bits his sin bearing death has been vindicated by God

to show us we have nothing to fear anymore and that he wins he will win he is with us and he never leaves our side today that's Mary weeping next we see

Mary clinging Mary must have grasped hold of Jesus if you have a look at verse 17 Jesus says do not hold on to me for I have not yet returned to the father go instead to my brothers and tell them I'm returning to my father and your father to my God and your God now this is a difficult verse I just have to be honest there's lots of interpretations of what Jesus might have meant here and I'm just going to go with one and it might be wrong you might disagree with me but it's interesting isn't it Jesus invites Thomas later in this same chapter to hold on to him to touch his hands and feet so it's not that holding him was wrong it seems to be that Mary clinging on to him continuing to hold him Mary seems to have grabbed Jesus as though she's saying I lost you once and I'm never going to let go of you again and she has to learn that he's not permanently back in that same way don't cling on to me because I've not yet gone to my father he still has to ascend to heaven and that will change the relationship that Mary can have with Jesus he won't be physically present anymore but he has to return to the father so that he can be crowned as the king of glory and send his spirit so that all of us can know him all across the world in other words the way we know

[19:34] Jesus now has been transformed by his death resurrection ascension and Mary has to let Jesus go so that he can be worshipped forever as king of glory and known personally by his spirit and that's what makes Easter so personal for us today now that Jesus has ascended to be with his father there is an encounter with him on offer for all of you personally an encounter to be invested in and enjoyed to hear from him daily in his word to commit that word to your heart to speak to him and experience knowing him as you pray to trust his presence with you all the time enriching the highest joys that you have in life and comforting you in the darkest sorrows that you'll ever face so those are our two Easter messages today two facts that remind us of the objective reality Jesus is real and if you're here and you've not thought much about those facts please could I talk to you afterwards

I've got a copy of I've got some copies of John's gospel with me I'd love to give one to you to read and look again at the evidence Easter is real and two mistakes from Mary that remind us that Easter is personal there is a subjective experience on offer here sometimes walking through the Christian life we just need to go back and remind ourselves of the truth the Christian faith feels less real to us and we have to go back and see these facts of history that show us our faith is in the right place for my money this is still the only thing worth betting your life on Jesus rose from the dead other times what we need is a reminder that we are to enjoy the reality of a living relationship today with the king of glory I wonder will you make Easter 2016 a special one for you by marking it as a time when you devote yourself afresh to that relationship to knowing

Christ as the king of glory by his spirit through his word let's pray together Lord Jesus we rejoice that you died for our sins that you died to save us we thank you that you endured the spiritual death of Calvary that we might have forgiveness and hope we praise you for the empty tomb the folded grave clothes for your tender words to Mary to the disciples peace be with you Lord we praise you that you are the risen one the champion that you've smashed death to bits that we might have new life with you and for you we thank you that like Mary for us the days of wailing without you have gone that we can know you as our companion and friend and we rejoice that because you have ascended we can know you by your spirit now crowned as you are as the king of glory help us we pray to grow in our trust of these truths and to devote ourselves to knowing you better

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Indeed Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Yeshua Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen!

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen