

We have seen the Lord

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[0 : 00] Our Bible reading this morning is from John chapter 20, and you'll find it on page 1089 in the Pew Bibles. John 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 disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him.

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 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 came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head.

The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside.

[1 : 20] He saw and believed. They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now 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 realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? Thinking he was the gardener, she said, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.

Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher.

[2 : 37] Jesus said, Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, I have seen the Lord, and she told them that he had said these things to her. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

After he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven.

If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. This is the word of the Lord. Brilliant.

[3 : 56] Thanks, Ruth, for reading. We're going to think a little bit about that portion of the Bible. And so while we're doing that, sorry, Joanne and Catherine are just helping me out here. They're just moving some things.

Don't worry about them. If you're a small person and you want to come back to the front, you're very welcome. The children want to come forward just to see a bit better and listen a bit more to know what's happening.

Brilliant. Brilliant. Brilliant. Okay, so we're going to ask for God's help as we turn to his word. And the way that we do that, James, he used to be in our church, taught us how to do that by going P-R-A-Y.

So let's do that. P-R-A-Y. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for this incredible, incredible story of what happened on that first Easter morning.

Please give us ears that can hear your voice, heads that can understand what happened in this true story, and hearts that are set on fire with the wonderful news.

[5 : 17] For we ask in the name of the risen Jesus. Amen. Amen. Well, I wonder if you could have a think of what your favorite film is. Do you have a favorite film?

Any ideas what your favorite film is? There was one over there. Favorite film? Yeah. Frozen? I thought Frozen might come up.

Sing 2? Great idea. Great. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Encanto? Yeah. Some great films. Yeah. Star Wars? Brilliant. A Man After My Own Heart.

So, just imagine, just imagine for a moment that your favorite film, instead of having a happy ending, it had a sad ending. Imagine how differently you'd feel at the end of the film.

Imagine if in Incredibles, Syndrome actually won and beat the Incredibles family and took them captive forever. Or imagine if in Return of the Jedi, Darth Vader just slay Luke Skywalker and the Rebel Alliance was defeated in the galaxy forever.

[6 : 24] Or imagine if in Lord of the Rings, Sauron actually got his hands on the Ring of Power and Middle Earth was destroyed. Or imagine if Nemo never got found. Or he got caught.

Or he got, there was like an oil slick and Nemo was just no more. Imagine it. Imagine how you'd feel at the end. Imagine if in Avatar, that kind of nasty guy in Avatar actually managed to beat all the Na'vi and Pandora just became this mining planet and the people died.

Imagine how you'd feel. It'd be quite different, wouldn't it? We want stories to have a happy ending.

But here's the thing. Until Easter Sunday, when Mary went to the tomb, they'd have been thinking, does the Jesus story have a sad ending or a happy ending?

Jesus had died in despair. His disciples had been in despair. They'd been in sadness. They'd been in hiding. Jesus died on the cross alone.

He did an amazing thing dying on the cross. But people weren't believing in him. They were hiding. Two of the followers say on Easter Sunday, they say, we had hoped.

[7 : 33] We had hoped this was going to be the promised king. But that hope had gone. Does the Jesus story have a sad ending or a happy ending? And it's worth thinking that if the Jesus story had a sad ending, because Jesus didn't rise, then actually the world has a sad ending.

And all of our life stories would have a sad ending. The story of every one of our lives. Because it would mean that everyone we know and love will eventually die.

None of us is going to live forever. The world has a sad ending unless Easter is real. Now, the offer of the Bible is an amazing one. The offer of the Bible is a future forever with a renewed body in a renewed world, the world we were all made for, that we long for, that will give us joy in God's presence forever.

It's an incredible offer. And most people out there today think it's a scam. Most people around us. And maybe the followers of Jesus were thinking overnight on that Saturday, maybe it was a scam. Maybe they were wondering. And then they find out that Easter changes everything. And we're going to think about three ways Easter changes everything. The first is, Easter turns our sadness into joy.

[8 : 49] It turns our sadness into joy. Do you remember who we had most time with in the reading? It was Mary. And what Mary saw first was she went to the tomb and she saw the stone had been rolled away.

But for Mary, it is still so incredible, so impossible, that a man would rise from the dead, just like it is for us today, that she doesn't think, oh, Jesus must be alive.

She ran to Peter and John. And she said, they, we don't know who they are, they've taken the Lord out of the tomb. So, incredible. Peter and John set off for the tomb and they run to the tomb.

Of course they ran. And one of them is faster than the other. Just think, if we were all having to run to the tomb to see what happens, who of you thinks you would be in the fast group and who of you thinks you'd be in the slow group?

Because you see, John is a faster runner than Peter. So who do you think would have been fast like John? Any of you think, any of you like cross country? Who of you might have been a bit slower holding back with Peter?

[9 : 51] Yeah? Good, good admission. Okay. Well look, John gets there first, but he doesn't go in the tomb. He looks in, he sees the grave clothes. Okay. Then Peter arrives and he goes straight in. He goes into the tomb and he sees the grave clothes. There's the grave clothes in the pile, there's the cloth that was around Jesus' face, around his head, around the body. That's there as well. And John says to us, he saw and believed.

And then Mary is outside the tomb and she's weeping because she's sad. She thinks, still thinks that someone's taken the body away. And then she sees two angels in the tomb, one at one end of where the body had been and one at the other.

And then she sees Jesus. But it's still so incredible to her, it's so impossible to her that Jesus would be alive. She thinks it's the gardener. So then we have this amazing thing that Mary asks Jesus where Jesus has put Jesus.

She says to him, where have you put the body? And then the gardener says to, well, it's not the gardener, is it? It's Jesus. So he says to her, Mary. And when he says Mary, it's like he calls her.

[11 : 05] So she was looking for him and couldn't find him, but Jesus has come to find her. And when he calls her, she sees who it is and she turns and she says, Rabboni, which means teacher.

And it's wonderful news. It turns their sadness into joy. So in verse 20, it says the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Just imagine how they must have felt.

Have you ever had a time when someone you love went away? Maybe a parent went away on a trip, they had to go away, and then you saw them again. Or maybe when it was all the COVID restrictions and you hadn't seen, maybe you hadn't seen a grandparent for a long time.

And then you saw them again. Do you remember how happy you feel when someone you've missed is there again? Well, imagine if they've died. Jesus had actually died and they saw him again.

How wonderfully happy must they have been? And then he tells Mary, he's going to ascend to the Father and he says to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

[12 : 08] He's going to go to the Father so that he can send the Spirit so that he can make his home in every one of us. And his Father can be our Father and his future can be our future with him forever.

It's wonderful news and it turns our sadness into joy. Now, the second thing, the second way that Easter changes everything is it turns our troubles into peace.

It turns our troubles into peace. And we get that from the next people who saw Jesus. Jesus comes to his disciples and he says, peace be with you.

After he'd said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, peace be with you. Now, that word for peace is a big word in the Bible.

It's the word for everything our hearts were made for and long for. Peace is so important in lots of places today. It's how people say hello. Just think, how do you say hello?

[13 : 11] What different ways do you use to say hello? When you see a friend, as well as saying hi, what else might you say to them? Yeah? Bonjour.

You might say that to them. That would be good. You might say, how's it going? I've got some ideas on the screen that I got from the englishstudyhere.com website. What's popping?

There we are. I don't know if anyone says that. Howdy. How's life treating you? What are you doing? There's different things we might say. But in lots of cultures and lots of parts even of Glasgow, in lots of languages, the way people say hello is they say peace to you.

They say shalom or they say salaam alaikum which is a way of saying peace to you because they know that peace is what we need. But peace is what we don't have because without Jesus, we're not at peace with God because every one of us has said in our hearts, shove off God.

I'm in charge. Know to your rules. And we call that sin that we've all said, shove off God in our hearts. We don't love him as we should and we don't love other people as we should.

[14 : 21] And because of sin, we all die. And some people think that religion is God has thrown down a rope from heaven and he said, if you climb that rope, you can be friends with me and have peace.

And the problem, I mean, I don't know about you, but I'm terrible at rope climbing. Awful at it. And that fits with the idea because the Bible says that none of us can make up for the ways we've mistreated God.

The Bible says none of us can earn our way back to God. That's our trouble. But three times, the risen Jesus says in this chapter, three times, peace be with you.

Because he's actually won for us peace with God. If you accept him in your heart as your savior, he's taken your sin when he was lifted on the cross and we can have peace with God.

Just imagine for a moment that we were living in a village a long time ago, far away, and we're all living in this village and we have a big problem, a scary enemy.

[15:21] We're being terrorized by an enormous, fierce, angry bear. And this bear, it comes to you. This bear, this bear, okay, it keeps coming out and hunting.

And we live in a village where people keep getting picked off by this bear one by one. We live our lives in terror about this bear. And it lives in a cave. And then one man from our village says one day, I've had enough of this bear and the terrorizing of this village.

I'm going to go and take the bear down. And we all cheer them on and he goes off to the cave. Who's going to be that hunter for us? David Ray. David Ray. Thank you. Are you ready for this, David? The coat's coming off.

I know what that means in Glasgow. Okay, so come this way. You head into our cave. We're cheering him on. Yes, Dave. Yes, Dave. You just, that's our cave, in the cave.

Okay. And there's a struggle. And then it all goes quiet.

[16:36] How do we know who won? Was it the man or the bear? Well, we know if someone comes out. Is it the bear or is it Dave? Come out of the cave.

It is Dave. Yes. You saved us. Well done. And so it is with the empty tomb, with Easter Sunday. Jesus said he was going to deal with death.

He was going to deal with our sin. He was going to defeat the devil. And then he comes out of the tomb on Easter Sunday and we know he won. Death didn't win. Our biggest enemies, our biggest troubles, death and sin and the devil, they've been defeated by Jesus.

He smashed death to bits so he can say, peace be with you. So Easter turns our sadness into joy. It turns our troubles into peace. Thirdly, Easter turns our fear into boldness.

And we see that in the disciples. So the disciples were hiding. We hear this from John. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders.

[17:42] So they were afraid. But then Jesus gives them a sign that he's going to send the Holy Spirit to give them courage to share the news about him.

It says this, verse 21. He says, As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit gives them the confidence and the power to go out and make Jesus known to the world.

And there were only 10 of them in that room at that time. Today, look around you. Here, there's a lot more than 10 of us, isn't there? And more importantly, the Holy Spirit has come to be in each believer so that he empowers us to share the news today that Jesus is alive.

And we can go on sharing that news. Who could we share that news with? That Jesus is alive. It's the best news anyone could ever hear because it's transforming. God didn't just send down a rope from heaven to say, climb that and you can have peace.

God fired a cannonball from heaven to smash death to bits and defeat our sin. And now, we can tell people, if they go to Jesus, they can see God.

[18:55] You know, one thing that really got me thinking this week was how when Mary looks in the tomb, she sees two angels, one at one end of where the body had been and one at the other. And I was thinking, why is that?

A long time before Jesus came, if you wanted to see the glory of God, the goodness of God, Moses, who led the people, had to go into a special tent called the tabernacle.

And he had to go into the holy place. And in the holy place, God was there by the ark. The ark was a box and it had two angels on it, one at one end and one at the other.

And it showed the presence of God, God with his people, and also the mercy of God, that God forgives his people. And now, Mary looks in the tomb and she sees the two angels, one at one end and one at the other.

Well, on the ark, there was two angels, one at one end and one at the other. But now, the body of Jesus has gone as though the angels are pointing us to see, if you want to see the goodness of God today, if you want to see the presence of God and the mercy of God, you go to him.

[20 : 02] You go to Jesus. Do you want to see God? Come to the risen Jesus. Let's pray together. Wow. Heavenly Father, thank you that Easter means there is a happy ending to Jesus' story, to your story, and to our world's story.

Help us to have joy in Jesus because he lives today. Help us to enjoy peace with you because he took our sin away. And help us to be brave in sharing that news because it's the best news anyone could hear.

Thank you for your spirit to help us share that news and turn to him ourselves. Amen. Amen.