**Livin’ the Life**

**The Empty Tomb**

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We are at the end of our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises. Last week Matt preached on the crucifixion, today we look at the empty tomb, 20:1-18.

**Mary Finds the Tomb Empty (1-2)**

Mary goes to the tomb early in the morning while it is still dark, with other women (cf v 2),[[1]](#footnote-1) and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance to the tomb and she assumed that someone stole Jesus’ body (1). Though Jesus had told his disciples many times and in many ways that he would die and rise from the grave, Mary was not expecting to find an empty tomb nor Jesus risen from the dead! She is disillusioned that Jesus had been crucified and now horrified that someone had stolen his body. She runs to tell Peter and John.

**Peter and John Investigate the Empty Tomb (3-10)**

When Peter and John hear the news, they race to the tomb. John is faster so he gets there first.[[2]](#footnote-2) He looks into the tomb and sees the linen cloths that wrapped Jesus’ body lying on the stone bed carved out of the rock but he did not go in (4-5). When Peter arrives, he passes by John as he goes into the tomb. Peter sees the linen cloths lying there but he notices that the cloth that wrapped Jesus’ face was neatly folded and separate from the cloths that wrapped his body (6-7). Then John went in, and he saw and believed (8). The disciples did not expect Jesus to be resurrected nor understand that Scripture said he would (9) but with the cloths still there he started connecting the dots and concluded that Jesus rose from the dead. The body could not have been stolen because if it had, the linens would have not been left behind nor folded. John and Peter see the evidence, the empty tomb and the grave clothing still there and John is convinced. These are thinking, reasonable people. Their Messianic hopes had been crushed by Jesus’ death yet that morning, the Son had risen over their darkness and given John renewed hope and faith, Jesus is alive! Then they go back home (10). But the empty tomb alone is not a sufficient reason to believe in Jesus’ resurrection so John takes us back to Mary.

**Mary Sees Jesus and Believes** **(11-16)**

Mary is outside the tomb crying sometime after Peter and John left. She is still grieving, thinking that Jesus’ body had been stolen. She looked inside the tomb and saw two angels dressed in white, heavenly witnesses, sitting where Jesus’ dead body had been (11-12). They ask, why are you crying and she responds, they have taken my Lord and I don’t know where they have laid him. She turns and sees Jesus but does not recognize him and assumes he is the gardener. He asks her, why are you weeping? Who are you seeking? She assumes these are kind questions of a stranger seeing her distraught. But Mary ignores his questions and instead asks him a question, if you have carried him off, tell me where you have put him and I will take him away (13-15). Then Jesus calls her name, Mary, and she spun around and said Rabboni (16, cf 10:3-4)! She too sees and believes. She must have fallen to her knees and grabbed his feet, her grief giving way to sheer joy. Jesus tells her, do not to cling to me because I have not yet ascended to the Father but instead go to my brothers and say to them, I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (17). Jesus’ death and resurrection and exaltation, secures for his disciples the promise of sharing in his sonship to the Father (1:12-13). Their adoption into God’s family is now secure, we are God’s family, the new people of God. He has not left us as orphans but God is our Father because we are united to Jesus, living in union with him. We are in him and he is in us like a branch to a vine, securing our eternal salvation and satisfaction in him. Everything Jesus said and did is secured because of his death and resurrection and exaltation. It guarantees that he is the lamb of God who takes away your sins so that you are no longer condemned to eternal misery but eternal life and happiness. It guarantees that he is the bread of life who came from heaven to satisfy the hunger of human heart (6:35). It guarantees that he is the living water that quenches your spiritual thirst (4:). It guarantees that he is the truth that sets you free from the penalty and the power and ultimately the presence of sin. And it guarantees that he has the power to keep you eternally safe because he will never cast you out (6:37) nor can anyone snatch you out of his hand.

**Mary Testifies to What she has Seen and Heard (17-18)**

Jesus tells Mary, do not cling to me but go and tell my brothers. She does and announces to the disciples, I have seen the Lord[[3]](#footnote-3) and told them the things Jesus told her (18). Mary has the honor of the heavenly witnesses and the first eye witness of Jesus’ resurrection. So together, the empty tomb and the eye witness account of Mary, we have sufficient evidence to Jesus’ resurrection. If this was not actually true then John never would have included a woman as the first eye witness of the resurrected Jesus as their testimony was not accepted in a Jewish court of law.

Jesus vindicates himself in his resurrection so that the world can see and believe.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What truth(s) in this passage or teaching struck you?
2. Why did the disciples not expect to find an empty tomb?
3. What do you think was going through Mary’s mind after they saw the resurrected Jesus.
4. How does the resurrection vindicate Jesus?
5. How would you summarize the main point of the teaching in one sentence?
6. How does this teaching affect my relationship with God?
7. How is God speaking to you from this passage/sermon?
8. How is God asking you to respond and obey him?
9. How does this teaching affect Jesus’ command to make disciples?
1. Matt noted last week in his sermon that each gospel gives different perspectives on the events surround Jesus’ death and resurrection but they do not contradict one another. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These kind of details are reminiscent of an eyewitness account. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The empty tomb and eye witness account of the resurrected Christ are sufficient evidence that the resurrection is a true historical event. The resurrected Christ was seen by hundreds of people who were not expecting to see him resurrected from the dead (1 Cor 15:6). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)