

He Must Rise From the Dead April 17, 2022

John 20:1-9

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Today is truly special. For me it is my most favorite day of the year. I tend to get sentimental as I think about the extent of God's love. Today's Scripture is a story that we all know very well. Early Sunday morning Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw the stone removed. She was excited and confused and assumed that some grave robbers had stolen the body. She ran to tell the others, found Peter and another disciple and proclaimed that someone had taken the body. Peter and other disciple were highly concerned about this so they run to the tomb. What they found was the linen that the body was wrapped in and the cloth for the head was rolled up by itself.

They did not understand the scripture that stated that he must rise from the dead. In stating that they do not know scripture, John reveals a distinction between two realities. What disciple knew then and what the disciples knew after they witnessed the resurrected Jesus. What is significant about the empty tomb is the fact that Jesus has conquered death. No one had taken the body of Jesus away; the tomb is supposed to be empty. The fact that the burial cloth was there is evidence that the body had not been stolen because thieves would have taken the body as it was wrapped. Jesus has left death behind; Jesus has conquered death

Today we celebrate the greatest thing that has even happened in all of history. It is the most important moment ever. It is a story of extraordinary love. Mary loved Jesus so much she was the first at the tomb John. Mary Magdalene gets a bad reputation but that is not biblical. She had great love for Jesus. He did something special for her that no one else ever could. She would never forget that he extended forgiveness to her. So, she had tremendous love for Jesus. Jesus commands in **John 15:12** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (NRSV). Not just love one another but love as Jesus loves. The most extraordinary love of all is the divine love that we receive from God and Jesus. Easter is all about God's love for us - love so great that it is willing to sacrifice for us.

It is easy to understand that love comes to us from God. It is easy to understand that Jesus is the solution to the problems of humanity and provides us with salvation. However, for the disciples at that time, the resurrection was not as easy to understand. Even though they witnessed the times when Jesus brought others back to life. The

disciples were there when Jesus brought back to life the daughter of Jairus, a young man within his own funeral procession, and Lazarus of Bethany. But when Jesus died, the disciples were shocked and confused even though Jesus told them at least three separate times that he must die and he would be raised from the dead. Jesus had to rise and he had to die in order to bring us salvation. He had to die on the cross and he had to rise from grave.

The purpose of all of this is salvation. God loves us so much that God decided to save us from the punishment that we deserve for transgression. God, out of love, decided to fix the broken relationship to get us back to God. It is a righteous relationship. God takes away the consequence of our sins and holds nothing against us. All we need to do is repent and accept God's gift of love, and we get total forgiveness and salvation.

Imagine you were there. It is hard to imagine from a 21st Century perspective. It is hard to imagine what it was like when we already know the end results. I ask you to imagine you were there without the benefit of what we know today. What would you do? What would you think? For all of Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus is the main thing. A very significant factor in all of this is God's presence. God came to be with us, help us, and support us in our struggle.