

## He Must Rise John 20:1-10

April 1, 2018

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. 10 Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Well here it is, today is Easter. We celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. All of the Gospels rely on Jesus death and resurrection as a means to understand his life and teaching. Passion week is a very exciting, intense, and reverent time. We left off here on Maundy Thursday with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, draping of the cross, and somber reflection of the pain and suffering of Lord and many participated in the annual prayer vigil.

Death came to Jesus in the middle of the afternoon. The Jews had a unique relationship with Romans due to a treaty and were allowed to maintain their unique religious customs and practices. So, they were allowed to keep their religious laws. One of those laws was that a criminal cannot be left hanging overnight or it would defile the land. The gospels report that Joseph of Arimathea gained permission from Pilate to retrieve the body of Jesus in order to arrange for immediate burial. The Gospel of John reports that he was helped by Nicodemus.

The crucifixion was a very hard reality for followers of Jesus. Evidence suggests Jesus did in fact die - the spear thrust into his side, the testimony of the centurion, the refraining from breaking his legs. Matthew reports that the chief priests and the Pharisees met with Pilate and talked about their fear that the body would be stolen. So, they sealed the tomb and posted guards. Meanwhile women followers prepared spices for anointing the body and they all, everyone, rested on the Sabbath.

In the Bible there are many stories about the dead being brought back to life by Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, Peter, and Paul. But the resurrection of Jesus is different. It is not a matter of his coming back to life; it is the beginning of a new age. Jesus promised "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me, though they may die, shall live." That's the promise, the Good News, the glory.

I will point out some more great principles. One is that this is the Son of God. It is not just that Jesus is the Messiah. This is the Son of God. That's what makes it all so significant. It is not that a price was paid but **the** price that was paid. It is divinity that is nailed to the cross. It is an act of God. Another point is that this has all been verified. He really did die. The tomb really was empty. In sealing the tomb his opponents verified his divine stature. Because they proved the disciples did not steal the body, in so doing they actually ended up adding credibility to the resurrection and the divine power behind it. They prevented any possibility of an alternative. The cynics had a problem - they could not disprove his divinity. In fact, they help to validate his

divine nature. They could not produce evidence of his death. By preventing the disciples from stealing the body they prove the alternative, that the body is gone and nobody stole it.

Another key point is the Old Testament prophecy. The gospel writers do everything they can to show that Jesus is a perfect match to the prophecy. Isaiah chapter 53 is an awesome parallel to the passion of Christ. I encourage you to read Isaiah chapter 53. It has been proven that this was written before birth of Jesus.

The fourth great principle for today is that of the resurrected Jesus. The tomb being found empty is very significant but there is more. Encountering the resurrected Jesus changes everything in the life of the witness. Look at the disciples. What did they do? They went home. After everything Jesus taught them they went home. They went home because they were shocked, confused, and scared. But seeing the post resurrected Jesus changes everything. The Apostle Paul changed because he encountered the post resurrected Jesus. Paul's testimony is that what he has received is that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture, and he was buried and raised.

It is the resurrected Jesus that makes a difference in the lives of disciples, the Apostle Paul, and us today. It is "because he lives I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future and live is worth living just because he lives" (Gloria and William Gaither). So, with the body gone, the opponents of Jesus have no evidence, nobody can disprove Jesus is the Son of God. Disciples know he is because he lives. Everything is now left up to the testimony of the disciples who bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus who must die because he must rise.

I'm going to conclude with a story about a man, who will not be named, that is an atheist. He makes a public display of it with bumper stickers and social media. He is known to be a generous man and lives his life as a caring person who is a law abiding citizen. He is even a smart man but falls short in one aspect. When he makes a decision he will consider evidence until he makes up his mind and then he stops and does not consider further evidence. His brain stops and shuts off other alternatives. He made a decision years ago that there is no God. You can show him all the evidence but it is all rejected. One thing he fails to understand is the dimension of hope. He fails to understand and consider that his position is selfish and harmful to others. You see, what Jesus offers us is hope. There is hope in another dimension beyond this earth. The Secret Place devotional for today says "I am heading to that place where tears don't exist, pain is no more, and joy never dies" (Janet Perez Eckles). This is the hope that Jesus provides. Hope is you will see your loved ones again. Hope is you will have no more pain or sorrow. Hope is that all of your past mistakes are forgiven. Hope is that you are one with the divine. Hope is what the resurrected Jesus gives to us.

He must die because he must rise. It is in rising that Jesus brings us all the hope we have in God, heaven, and living in peace with Jesus forever. Jesus said "whoever believes in me, though they may die, shall live" (John 11:25). The hope that is given verifies that Jesus is the Son of God because the hope is given to everyone and that is beyond anything any human can provide. Hope comes to us from God through Jesus. So, he must die because he must rise. Because it is the risen Lord that brings hope to us.