

**Sermon: New Life**

**Text: John 20:1-18**

**Discussion Questions:**

In describing the events of the crucifixion and resurrection, John includes details that the other Gospel writers don't mention. This stands to reason, because John was the only disciple who was personally present at both the cross and the empty tomb (Peter was with John at the tomb). Only John mentions that the Jewish religious leaders ask Pilate to break the legs of the crucified victims in order to speed death along. The soldiers are ordered to break the legs, but when they come to Jesus, they realize that he is already dead, so they don't break His legs. This is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

John is also the only Gospel writer to mention that Jesus' side is pierced. In order to ensure that Jesus was really dead, one of the soldiers takes his spear and pierces Jesus side and blood and water flow out. This is also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

In addition to Jesus' legs not being broken, and His side being pierced, John also wants his readers to know that Jesus was buried by two "secret disciples" (Joseph and Nicodemus) who by their actions are secret disciples no more. This burial also fulfills Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

John's point is that Jesus is assuredly dead—and that He is the promised Messiah who fulfills Old Testament prophecy precisely. The way that Jesus dies cannot be explained by coincidence or chance. John wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and the crucifixion is God's plan to save the world.

- What does a person need to know in order to believe in Jesus and turn to Him for salvation?
- What did you understand about Jesus when you first believed in Him?
- What was the thing, or who was the person, that started you on the road to believing in Jesus?
- Has your understanding of who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him changed since you initially believed in Jesus? In what way has your faith changed or grown?

**Examination:**

- Read **John 20:1-10**
  - What day of the week did Mary return to the tomb where Jesus' body was placed?
  - Who accompanied Mary to the tomb that morning (see Lk 24:10; Mk 16:1; Mt 28:1)? Why do you think John states that only Mary Magdalene went to the tomb?
  - Why is it important for John (and the other Gospel writers) to mention that it was the first day of the week? Why is the first day of the week important to Christians today—as well as believers down through history?
  - Does John's detail that it was still dark when Mary went to the tomb provide any unique insight to the narrative?
  - What were Mary and the other women going to the tomb to do (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1)? Why was it important for them to do this? How do you think they were going to accomplish this—given that the tomb was closed and sealed?
  - What would your thought and reaction have been the moment you see that the stone has been rolled back? What was Mary's (v. 2)?

- Mary declares: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” Who do you think Mary thinks the “they” are?
- Does Mary suspect that Jesus has been resurrected at this point? What is her logical conclusion about what has happened?
- What do the disciples do when they learn that Jesus’ body is no longer in the tomb (v. 3)? Who wins the footrace? Why do you think John tells us the outcome of the race? What does this disciple do when he arrives? What does he “see”? Why do you think he refrains from actually going into the tomb?
- What happens when Peter arrives at the tomb (v. 6)? Why do you think he proceeds to go in? What does he “see” when he goes in?
- How have Peter and John been contrasted throughout the Gospel of John (see 13:23-24; 18:15-16; 21:7-8)?
- What is unusual about the linen cloths that are found inside the tomb (v. 7)?
- What is significant about the face cloth and where it is found?
- If this were the work of a tomb raider, what would be the items of value that they would take? Would they have likely taken the body?
- If someone were to have stolen the body, would they have unwrapped it?
- When John decides to go into the tomb, what does he “see” and what happens as a result of what he sees (v. 8)? Does he have everything completely figured out at this point (v. 9)? Why do you think they returned to where they were staying?

**Read John 19:11-18**

- Mary obviously followed John and Peter back to the tomb—but remained after the men had inspected the empty tomb and left. She finally got up the courage to look into the tomb herself, and saw something the men hadn’t seen. What?
- Why do you think she saw the two angels, and not the men?
- Did Mary recognize Jesus at first? Who did she think she was talking to? Why would she assume that she was talking with a gardener?
- What are some possible reasons why Mary didn’t recognize Jesus? Was she expecting Jesus to be alive?
- What did Jesus say that prompted Mary to recognize him (v. 16)? What is so significant about this? What might we learn about God from the fact that the very first thing Jesus says following the resurrection is a person’s name?
- What does the fact that the first eyewitness to the resurrection is a woman confirm about the reality of the resurrection? If the resurrection was made up, who would be the first eyewitnesses?
- What message did Mary deliver to the disciples (vv. 17-18)? Is this the message that Jesus sent her to deliver?

**Application:**

How did the resurrection change Mary? How did it change the disciples? How has it changed YOU? Do you experience the JOY of the resurrection? Are you sharing this hope and joy with others? The disciples were obviously willing to die for their belief in the resurrection. Is this a truth you are willing to die for?