

# The Risen King

John 20

*Pastor Mark John Bennett*

## Introduction

The inevitable end to all good stories is death, even if it ends in “and they lived happily ever after!” So, John’s narrative, up to chapter 19, ends in death and despair. But the story did not end there!

The major difference between the life and teachings of Jesus and those of any other great religious leader lies in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and the others did not!

John 20 recounts the pivotal encounters of the disciples with the resurrected Jesus, revealing the transition from despair to belief, and highlighting the evidence and implications of his victory over death.

## 1. The King is Missing (vv. 20:1-10)

### The Resurrection

*Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”*

*<sup>3</sup> Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. <sup>8</sup> Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— <sup>9</sup> for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then they went home.*

\* **A. The Setting of Despair (20:1):** Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb – a place of death, loss, and shattered hope. The darkness of Friday still lingers.

\* **B. The Shocking Discovery (20:1b):** The stone is rolled away! This unexpected sight immediately signals that something extraordinary has happened.

\* **C. Mary's Urgent Report (20:2):** Her immediate conclusion: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” This reveals her initial understanding – a stolen body, not a resurrection.

\* **D. The Race to the Tomb (20:3-10):** Peter and John's frantic run illustrates the urgency and confusion of the moment. Their actions show their deep concern and desire for answers.

\* **E. The Evidence Inside (20:6-7):** The linen cloths lying there, and the separate wrapping of Jesus' head, provide silent yet powerful testimony. This wasn't a hurried removal by thieves.

\* **F. The First Glimmer of Understanding (20:8):** John, the beloved disciple, sees and believes. What did he believe? Likely the implication of the empty tomb and the way the linens were arranged – hinting at resurrection, not robbery.

\* **G. Lingering Doubt (20:9-10):** Even with the evidence, their understanding of the Scripture about Jesus rising from the dead was still incomplete.

**Key Takeaway:** The initial reaction to the empty tomb was one of confusion and loss, even among His close followers. The physical evidence (rolled stone, arranged linens) hinted at something beyond a simple theft, leading John to a preliminary belief, though full understanding was still lacking.

**Key Takeaway for Today:** Even when faced with loss, disappointment, or the feeling of the absence of God, the empty tomb reminds us that God's story doesn't end in death. Our initial understanding of difficult situations might be limited, but we should be moved by the evidence and remain open to the possibility of God's extraordinary intervention and the truth of the resurrection, even if we don't fully grasp it immediately.

## 2. The King Encountered: Jesus and Mary Magdalene (vv. 20:11-18)

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

<sup>11</sup> *Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in.*

<sup>12</sup> *She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.* <sup>13</sup> *"Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.*

*"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."*

<sup>14</sup> *She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him.* <sup>15</sup> *"Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"*

*She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."*

<sup>16</sup> *"Mary!" Jesus said.*

*She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").*

<sup>17</sup> *"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"*

<sup>18</sup> *Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.*

\* **A. Mary's Grief and Persistent Search (20:11-13):** Mary remains at the tomb, weeping. Her sorrow blinds her to the initial evidence. She is focused on the loss of Jesus' body.

\* **B. The Gardener and the Revelation (20:14-16):** Jesus appears, but Mary doesn't recognize him at first. His simple question, *"Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"* leads to a profound revelation when he calls her name, *"Mary!"*

\* **C. A Moment of Recognition and Joy (20:16b):** The sound of his voice breaks through her grief. *"Rabboni!"* – **MY MASTER, My Teacher!** This is the personal, transformative power of encountering the resurrected Christ.

\* **D. The Commission (20:17-18):** Jesus instructs Mary not to cling to him in his earthly form, as he is ascending to the Father. He gives her a vital mission: *"Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"* Mary becomes the first evangelist of the resurrection.

**Key Thought:** The resurrected Jesus first reveals himself personally to a grieving Mary. This encounter highlights the power of recognizing Jesus' voice and the transformative joy of the resurrection. Mary is then commissioned as the first messenger of this good news to the other followers.

**Key Takeaway for Today:** The resurrected Jesus desires a personal encounter with you! He meets us in our sin, failure or grief and reveals himself in ways that resonate with our hearts. Just as Mary's life was transformed by recognizing his voice, our personal relationship with Jesus brings profound joy and compels us to share the good news of his resurrection with our "brothers and sisters" – our community and beyond.

### 3. The Return of the King: Jesus and the Disciples (vv.20:19-23)

#### Jesus Appears to His Disciples

*<sup>19</sup> That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. <sup>20</sup> As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! <sup>21</sup> Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

\* **A. Fear and Isolation (20:19a):** The disciples are gathered behind locked doors, gripped by fear of the Jewish leaders.

\* **B. Jesus' Unexpected Presence (20:19b):** Despite the locked doors, Jesus stands among them – a demonstration of his resurrected, glorified body. His first words: *"Peace be with you!"*

\* **C. The Evidence of His Victory (20:20):** Jesus shows them his hands and his side – the marks of his crucifixion, now the badges of his triumph over death.

\* **D. Renewed Joy and Commission (20:21):** *"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* They move from fear to joy and receive their own mission, mirroring Jesus' own.

\* **E. The Gift of the Holy Spirit (20:22):** Jesus breathes on them and says, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* This signifies the empowering presence of God for their mission.

\* **F. The Authority to Forgive (20:23):** Jesus gives them the profound authority to forgive sins and withhold forgiveness – a responsibility rooted in their connection to him and the Spirit.

**Key Thoughts:** Jesus' appearance to the fearful disciples behind locked doors demonstrates his resurrected presence transcends physical barriers and brings peace. He commissions them for their mission, mirroring his own, and empowers them with the Holy Spirit and the authority to forgive sins.

**Key Takeaway for Today:** Even when fear and isolation grip the community of believers (whether in Madrid or globally), the resurrected Jesus brings peace and his empowering presence through the Holy Spirit. As he sent his disciples, he sends us into the world with a mission of reconciliation and forgiveness, equipped by the Spirit to be his witnesses in our workplaces, families, and city.

## 4. Believing the King: Jesus and Thomas (vv. John 20:24-29)

### Jesus Appears to Thomas

*<sup>24</sup> One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> They told him, "We have seen the Lord!"*

*But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."*

*<sup>26</sup> Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said. <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"*

*<sup>28</sup> "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.*

*<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."*

\* **A. Thomas' Absence and Skepticism (20:24-25):** Thomas missed the initial appearance and refuses to believe without tangible proof. His doubt represents a common human struggle.

\* **B. Jesus' Patient Return (20:26-27):** A week later, Jesus appears again, this time with Thomas present. He directly addresses Thomas' doubts, offering him the physical evidence he demanded.

\* **C. Thomas' Overwhelming Confession (20:28):** Faced with the resurrected Christ, Thomas proclaims, *"My Lord and my God!"* This is a powerful declaration of Jesus' divine identity.

\* **D. The Blessing for Those Who Believe Without Seeing (20:29):** Jesus' words to Thomas, *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed,"* speak directly to future generations of believers.

**Key Thoughts:** Thomas' initial doubt highlights the human need for tangible proof. Jesus patiently meets him, leading to a powerful confession of Jesus' divinity (*"My Lord and my God!"*). This encounter also offers a blessing for those who believe without physical sight.

**Key Takeaway for Today:** It's okay to have doubts and questions in our faith journey. Like Thomas, we may sometimes crave tangible proof. However, Jesus' patient interaction with Thomas ultimately leads to a powerful declaration of faith. For modern believers, we are blessed when we choose to believe based on the testimony of Scripture and the witness of the Holy Spirit, even without physical proof.

John 20 teaches us that even in the darkest moments in life, there is always hope. The resurrection proves there is life after death. Not just eternal life after we die, but abundant life when we listen to Jesus, receiving Him as our Lord and Savior. We die to self and have real-life, here and now, with Him.

**JESUS IS ALIVE! HE IS RISEN!** He defeated sin on the cross! He conquered death with His resurrection! He gives us Himself, meaning we have His peace, His Holy Spirit abiding with and in us. Take Heart, Jesus has overcome!