

Holy Week in Biblical Perspective
Resurrection Sunrise Service
“The Power in the Cure”
John 20
Mr. Bruce Stallings
April 12, 2020 • 6:30 a.m. Sunday Sermon

Let's look at John 20 which is the resurrection account from the eye witness testimony of John. One of the thoughts that has impacted me during this current pandemic we are going through is to think of someone in another country who may be the only Christian in their city or community and 10 people would be an expansion of their celebration of Easter. I sure look forward to gathering back together as a church family to worship our Lord together. As we look at this text we know from other Gospels that the earth shook by the tomb as the angel of the Lord rolled the stone away and sat on it. The angel's appearance was like lightning and his clothing was as snow. This is a powerful event that built fear into the hearts, minds and lives of the guards for in fact most ran off but some went to tell the chief priests who in turn gave them a bribe that they would not tell anyone what actually happened. They wanted them to lie about what happened saying that while the guards were sleeping the Disciples came and took the body of Jesus away.

Not all the guards kept that secret because Matthew was able to record what actually happened. Here is a speculation or perhaps a hopeful guess which is that some of those guards became Christians. They experienced Jesus rising from the dead and that angel and some of them told them it happened. It wasn't just an event in their life but it changed their life. It changed their eternity even the way it does for us. So let's look at John's account the way experienced Easter that first sunrise morning.

John 20:1-10 says [1] *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away 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] So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. [4] Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. [5] And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. [6] Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, [7] and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. [8] Then the other disciple, who had 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 went back to their homes.*

I'd like to give some observations from this passage and one will probably not change your life but the others will hopefully help in your walk with the Lord. The first observation is clearly John is faster than Peter but Peter is bolder than John. When John gets there he doesn't go in the tomb but when Peter gets there he goes straight into the tomb and that shouldn't surprise us for that's a typical Peter action from what we know of him in the Scriptures. I'm not too partial on Peter because I've learned so much from his immediate reactions.

Secondly, after John goes into the tomb he gives us a bit of a personal testimony and a little bit of an editorial about himself and Peter because clearly they discussed this at later times. John says of himself that he saw the empty tomb and believed. It was at that moment that John

realized Jesus had risen from the dead. Then he says that he and Peter did not yet understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead. A key word in the declaration he makes is that Jesus says ‘must’ rise from the dead. He didn’t say He could or would or did rise from the dead but declared He must rise from the dead. So what is John trying to tell us by using this word ‘must’?

When I was a young teenage boy my older brother and I had asked my dad if we could go and watch a football game at a friend’s house. My dad was going to have to leave the house so he told us ‘you *must* finish the yard work before you leave to go watch the football game.’ In other words, we could not finish the yard work after the game. Neither one of us really wanted to finish the lawn. We ended up coming up with a plan to break the lawn mower as my brother took out the spark plug and broke the tip off of it so that now the lawn mower didn’t work. So in our opinion we have now found the loop hole in the word *must*. If the lawn mower doesn’t work then you must not cut the grass before you leave so we took off for the football game thinking we had just out smarted our engineer dad. Our dad came home and saw the lawn had not been finished and we were gone. He found us at the friend’s house and we had to come home and finish the lawn. We explained to him the lawn mower was broken.

So he put us in the car and took us to the mower shop. We thought he was going to fix the lawn mower but half way there I realized the lawn mower wasn’t in the car. We get to the mower shop and my dad talks to the owner. My dad gets a push mower. It is a lawn mower without a motor so the person pushing it is the motor. The one my dad got the blade didn’t turn well and it is hard to push on hills. We got back to the house and told us we had to cut the grass with the push mower until the lawn mower is fixed. It took my dad over two months to replace the spark plug on the lawn mower. We then understood what the word *must* meant.

John uses this word must and in the Greek this word must actually carries two possibilities in terms of its interpretation. The Greek word for must is *dei* and its definition is it’s necessary or inevitable. So if you said something like ‘what goes up must come down’ that’s inevitable. It’s going to happen. The other meaning is that it is necessary for something to happen. When John the Baptist says in John 3:30 ‘He must increase but I must decrease’ it’s inevitable that He would increase but it’s also necessary in our lives that He increase but also that we decrease. I think both meanings apply to this passage.

Let’s start with the meaning of inevitable. John declares to us that he and Peter did not yet understand the Scripture. We’re not exactly sure which Scripture he was talking about but we’re confident that he would have been familiar with the prophecies of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 53. It seems impossible during this Holy Week and all that happened that they would not have remembered this passage.

Isaiah 53:1-12 says [1] *Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? [2] For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. [3] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

[4] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. [5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[7] He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. [8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? [9] And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

[10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt. (All of this has encompassed all of what they have experienced on Good Friday but then goes on to say...) he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (He must have risen from the grave.) [11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. [12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes (today) intercession for the transgressors.

John and Peter did not yet understand the Scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead because the Prophets proclaimed and Jesus Himself proclaimed it recently to them. There are three definitive accounts where Matthew records Jesus saying He will die and be risen from the dead. Matthew 16:21 says *[21] From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.* Matthew 17:22-23 says *[22] As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, [23] and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.*

In a very recent encounter with His Disciples to what has just happened we see in Matthew 20:17-19 says *[17] And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, [18] "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death [19] and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*

The Scripture proclaimed it and Jesus Himself proclaimed it. When Jesus makes that declaration it's inevitable. It is absolutely going to happen. Not only did the Disciples hear this but even the chief priests were worried about this because they went to Pilate. Matthew records this account in Matthew 27:62-63 which says *[62] The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate [63] and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' So they understood it.*

We know what Joshua declared to his people that not one word of all the good promises that the Lord has made to the house of Israel has failed for all have come to pass and all will come to pass (Joshua 21:45). It is prophesied. It is inevitable, but it's also necessary. There are many reasons we could unfold about it being necessary but I just want to use what was declared by Paul to the church in Corinth.

I Corinthians 15:3-11 says *[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to*

James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. [9] For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [10] But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. [11] Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Now Paul is going to give a defense for the resurrection of the dead, meaning the resurrection of the people from the dead. So he goes on to say in I Corinthians 15:12-19, *[12] Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. [14] **And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.** [15] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [16] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. [17] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and **you are still in your sins.** [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, **we are of all people most to be pitied.***

Verse 14 is a powerful statement Paul makes. Our proclamations of the Gospel are vanity. It's in vain that we make this declaration because we would be misrepresenting God. Then he says that you would have placed your faith in something that did not play out. If Christ didn't do what He said He was going to do then He wasn't who He said He was. He would be a false prophet.

Another powerful statement Paul makes is in verse 17 where then if Christ hadn't been raised from the dead we would still be in our sins. What is the point he is making to them? Paul makes a statement about the faith of Abraham in Romans 4:22-25 which says *[22] That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."* *[23] But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, [24] but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, [25] who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.* Being justified, sinners being declare righteous, the imputed righteousness of Christ is bound to the empty tomb, to the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Paul declares that if Christ hasn't been risen from the dead then the dead in Christ have perished. In other words, they're not with the Lord. Their faith was futile.

Another powerful statement Paul makes is in verse 19 of I Corinthians 15 that if Christ didn't rise from the dead we are people most to be pitied, but Christ did rise from the dead. We know Jesus did just on the account of all the witnesses who saw Jesus after He was risen who Paul points out in I Corinthians 15, including himself. By faith that God gives to us we believe, trust, depend and our complete hope is in the reality of His resurrection from the dead. Because He did rise from the dead our proclamation is not in vain. Every single proclamation of the Gospel may not immediately result in the conversion of a lost soul but every single proclamation of the Gospel does not come back void so we proclaim Christ is risen and the Gospel message time and time again and trust God to do that work.

Our faith in Christ is not in vain. If and only if you have placed your faith in Christ then we have confidence He is who He said He was. He did what He said He was going to do. He laid down His life. He took it up again and that tomb is empty. We serve a risen Savior but I do need to say to you that if you have placed your faith in anything other than Christ then what Paul is saying in I Corinthians 15 would be true of you. That thing you have your faith in no matter what it is including yourself, is in vain and will not bring you peace with God. Only Christ He is

the Way, the Truth and the Life for no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). You may think what you have your faith in is genuine faith and it may be genuine faith but if it's not in Christ then it's in the wrong thing for that faith would be futile.

Also if Christ is risen from the dead, then we are not people to be pitied. We are pitiful sinners, dead in our trespasses but we have been made alive in Christ. We have been justified through the power of His resurrection from the dead. We are cleansed from our iniquities and cured of our sin.

Right now in the midst of this unique corona virus crisis there are many people, most of whom we do not know, working extremely hard to find a cure for this virus. Basically our hope right now is that we just don't get it and we really pray for those in the high risk category. I was reading the other day about a group of people who are probably in the highest risk category. They have the issue of a primo immune deficiency. In other words, they have the inability to fight off disease. So in the midst of this, for them to get the corona virus would be a death sentence for them. A form of this is severe combined immune deficiency, or otherwise known as SCID or the bubble boy disease. It is deadly. I can't imagine trying to deal with this corona virus and have zero ability to fight off any type of virus whatsoever.

We face a much more potent enemy than corona virus and that is sin. We have no immunity to sin. As a matter of fact, we're not immune deficient to sin, but we're immune barren. We are born in our sin and have no ability to cure that on our own or with the help of someone or something else. Yet there is a cure and it's the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Gospel is the empty tomb. The power of that cure from sin is our risen Savior who we celebrate.

Imagine for a moment that when you finish reading this you look to your phone and see they have found a cure for the corona virus. Can you imagine the joy and relief that would come upon people if that were to happen right now? Yet I have the joy today to proclaim that there is a cure for that sin and that is only Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture, He was buried, raised on the third day, delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God our Father, we do thank You that You so determined that Your Son must rise from the dead. It was Your will to sacrifice His life, to forsake Him and raise Him from the dead and we glorify You. We celebrate the empty tomb and our risen Savior. We do embrace your justification in our lives, declaring sinners justified in Christ. Lord, You poured our Your grace on the cross. You defeated sin and death rising from the grave and we pray Lord now that You would do that work of salvation in the hearts of those who have not yet placed their trust in You. May they hear and believe, Lord. Open their minds to understand the Scriptures and by faith embrace Christ alone for salvation. Lord, thank You for declaring to us that Christ must rise from the dead for it's inevitable and it's necessary that it is proclaimed that Christ must rise from the dead and He has done what is necessary. Lord, I pray that we would respond by the power of Your Spirit to acknowledge and confess our sins for we must be found in Christ to be at peace with You. Lord, thank You that by Your powerful hand we serve a risen Savior and we wait expectantly for His glorious return. Come quickly Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.