

Risen Savior

Lesson 10

John 20:1-18, 31

Opener

A man named Comrade Lunachatsky was speaking to a large group gathered in Moscow shortly after the Communist revolution. He was trying to persuade the people that they no longer needed religion—science would take its place. After a long discussion, he asked if anyone had anything to add. A young priest stood up and humbly assured the man that his comment would be brief. He walked to the front, turned to the audience, and confidently stated, “Christ is risen!” In response, the audience shouted, “He is truly risen!” (story taken from Brennan Manning, *Reflections for Ragamuffins*, p. 95).

Scripture

Key Verses: Early 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. 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 I don’t know where they have put him!”

Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn’t go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying to the side. Then the other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they hadn’t realized that the Scriptures said he would rise from the dead.

vv. 1-10

Jesus had tried to prepare his followers for all that would happen. In Matthew 17:22-23, he tells his disciples, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed. He will be killed, but three days later he will be raised from the dead.” This is one of several times Jesus tells his disciples he will die but will raise again. So why were his disciples so surprised when he *did* rise again?

Discussion

Jesus’ followers had watched him die on the cross. It was a very real experience for them, and in their grief they must have forgotten his words of hope. However, it also shows their lack of faith that Jesus was who he said he was. It was not until they saw him again that they believed he was the Messiah with absolute certainty.

In Luke's Gospel, the angel says to the women at the tomb, "Don't you remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again the third day?" (Luke 24:6-7).

The next verse says, "*Then* they remembered that he had said this" (v. 8). The reality of the cross had blinded the women (and the disciples) to the truth about Jesus.

Ask: Do we ever allow the realities of life—the here and now—to make us forget the truth about who Jesus is?

When we become preoccupied with our present circumstances, it is easy to let fear take over in our hearts. This is exactly what Mary does in the verses in John. Her fear took the place of her hope in Jesus. She runs and tells Peter and John that someone has stolen Jesus' body. Peter and John, also blinded by the grief of Jesus' death, run to the tomb to see for themselves. They find the tomb empty and Jesus' burial clothes left behind. John shares his realization that until that moment he "hadn't realized that the Scriptures said he would rise from the dead." Knowing there is nothing for them at the empty tomb of their Lord, Peter and John return home.

vv. 11-18

However, Mary still does not understand the miracle that has taken place, and she remains outside the tomb weeping. She looks into the tomb again, and sees two angels. She continues to share her lament at what she thinks is a grave robbery with the angels and then to Jesus himself (although she doesn't know it!). It is not until Jesus says her name that she realizes it is Jesus. This scene reminds us of Jesus' words in John 10:3-4: "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. . . . And they follow him because they recognize his voice."

Mary must have been so excited to see her Lord alive. She must have embraced him, because Jesus has to tell her, "Don't cling to me" (v. 17). He knows his other disciples are still in agony over his death. So he commands her to go and tell his disciples that he is alive. She obeys and goes.

Jesus appears to his disciples several times to assure them he is truly alive. All doubt is cast away when he shows them his nail scars and wounds. He is truly risen!

In verse 31, John gives his readers the reason he has for writing down these events:

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life.

The Resurrection validates everything Jesus said and did, including his death. Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He showed us that he is victorious over sin and death.

The cross signifies the payment for our sins. The resurrection assures us that his death was not in vain. "Death is swallowed up in victory. . . . How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (I Corinthians 15:55, 58).

Application

Ask: What difference does the resurrection of Christ make in our lives today?

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can know we follow and serve a risen Savior. He was not defeated by death, but overcame it through the power of God. And we can experience that same victory if we are willing to give up *our* lives. Jesus has told us that it is in losing our lives that we shall find them (Matthew 10:39).

Philippians 3: 10 tells us that “I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I can learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that, somehow, I can experience the resurrection from the dead.”

However, if we are not willing to die to ourselves and our desires, we cannot experience this victory over sin and death.

Ask: What does it mean to die to ourselves?

This means that we give our lives to Jesus and give him control of our decisions and actions. It is a process that begins with accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior, and then continues as we commit ourselves to him each day. It isn't easy, but it is worth it.

We cannot share in the glory of His resurrection unless we first share in his suffering. Suffering may mean getting rid of certain things in our life or obeying Jesus when it isn't comfortable. In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

He Lives

**I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living, whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.**

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

He walks with me and talks with me

Along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!

You ask me how I know He lives:

He lives within my heart.