

THE RISEN CHRIST

John 20:1-31

Key Verse: 20:17b

"Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Jesus taught his disciples about his death and resurrection again and again (Mk 8:31,32). But the disciples did not understand his teaching, because the resurrection of Jesus sounded impractical. If Jesus had talked about marriage, they could have understood very well. And they were too young to think about matters after death. Nevertheless, the author shows us the evidences of Jesus' resurrection in many ways. Also, the author tells us how the Risen Christ served his disciples until they received the Holy Spirit, and as a result, their spiritual eyes were opened to see the glorious Risen Jesus Christ. Then their sorrow was changed into heavenly joy.

First, the empty tomb (1-18). It was Sunday morning, the first day of the week. The Jewish Sabbath is our Saturday. While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. The other gospels tell us that several women went to the tomb including Mary, the mother of Jesus (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1; Lk 24:10). But John confines his story to Mary Magdalene, so as to emphasize the detailed factual evidence that Mary Magdalene had seen the empty tomb. What kind of person was Mary? Mary had once lived a wayward life. As a result, she was possessed by seven demons. But now Mary Magdalene was the one who stood beneath the cross crying endlessly until Jesus' crucifixion was over (19:25). She observed the tortured Jesus. She had also watched the burial of Jesus' body (Lk 23:55). After his burial, she went home with her irrevocably wounded heart. That night, she cried all night, because she did not know why such a good man as Jesus had to be condemned and crucified. The day after the Sabbath, early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, she trudged out of the Jerusalem city gate and went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices. It was out of her thanks to Jesus for his grace upon her life. But in order to anoint his body she had several hindrances to cope with. She did not know how to remove the huge stone which had closed the entrance of the tomb. She did not know how to avoid the Roman [security guards](#) who were posted there to keep watch over the tomb. Despite these obstacles, she wanted to anoint Jesus' body with spices, for Jesus had been the meaning of her life. When she got to the tomb, however, she saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. What a disaster! She assumed that his body had been taken away by his enemies. Mary's last hope to anoint Jesus' body with spices was gone, and she was endlessly sorrowful. It seems that she was born to be sorrowful. Anyway, Mary went running to Peter and the other disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him" (2). In verse 2, "the other disciple, the one Jesus loved," refers to John himself. He had a great assurance that Jesus loved him most. John was more than sure that Jesus loved him most. So he called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John felt that Jesus loved him first among the disciples (19:26). So he also loved Jesus most. Here we learn that love is like a fountain.

Second, Peter and John ran to the tomb (3-9). So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple, John, outran Peter and reached the tomb first (3-4). Peter lost this race. However, John was considerate and fearful. So he just nervously looked in the tomb but did not go in. On the other hand, on arriving Peter boldly went in and saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. Though Peter lost in running, he made a final goal in and won the race due to his boldness. The author stresses the fact that the cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. It was lying there in regular folds as if the body of Jesus had simply vanished. Peter and John went and saw inside the tomb. Thus they became witnesses of the empty tomb (8). In the future, they would have to suffer much as witnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection. Still they were not ready to be witnesses. They saw the empty tomb. But they could not remember Jesus' words concerning his death and resurrection. Verse 9 says in parentheses, "They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead."

Third, two angels in white (10-16). The disciples went back home. But Mary stood outside crying. As she bent over to look into the tomb, she saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot (12). They were attending angels of the glorious Risen Christ. As in fact, Jesus had repeatedly spoken to his followers, he rose again from the dead. But Mary Magdalene was only crying, not knowing Jesus rose again. In actuality, without the resurrection of Christ all men, regardless of their human condition--king and subjects, rank and file--are under the power of sin and death; they have to cry sorrowfully all their lifetimes in the midst of tragedies and agonies of human life. All people are fatalistic because of the power of death. Finally they say, "Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1Co 15:32). Mary Magdalene received much love from Jesus. But she was one of the crying people, because she had not yet believed in the glorious resurrection of Christ.

So the angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" She said, "They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him." Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there (10-14). But she did not realize that it was Jesus. The Risen Christ knew that Mary was still under the power of sin and death. Her problem was that she also did not remember Jesus' teaching about his death and resurrection. The Risen Christ asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" The Risen Christ asked her again, "Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him" (15). Mary's last hope was to anoint Jesus' body with spices. To Mary belongs the glory of being the first person to see the Risen Christ. However, she had not yet believed the glorious Risen Christ (14). So she was a woman of sorrow. She was loved so much by Jesus. But her sorrow problem remained, because she did not believe in Jesus' glorious death and resurrection.

Look at verse 15a. "'Woman,' he said, 'why are you crying?'" It meant, "Jesus is risen, defeating the power of sin. Therefore, you have no reason to cry." Jesus was crucified and died. Jesus was buried in the tomb. But Jesus rose again from the dead as he had promised. Now the Risen Christ is King of kings (Rev 19:16), and Judge of the living

and the dead. So she should be joyful. But she was crying because she did not believe the resurrection of Jesus. Mary was broken and sorrowful, not because of her human condition, but because of her unbelief. Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher) (16). After hearing the voice of the Risen Christ, Mary could believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

Fourth, "Go and tell my brothers..." (17-18). After meeting the glorious Risen Jesus, Mary was so happy that she wanted to hold on to Jesus forever. What was Jesus' response? "Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God''" (17). The Risen Christ is not only a shepherd-like God, but he is the Risen Christ and King of kings and the Almighty God. Jesus knew that a man without mission has to cry. So Jesus said to her, "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" When we read verse 17 prayerfully, we find that the Risen Christ gives her a holy mission to be a witness. The Risen Christ also gives a living hope in the kingdom of God to Mary. It applies to all of us. Mary Magdalene saw the glorious Risen Christ and received a mission that she should go and tell the disciples that she saw the Risen Christ. Each time Mary shouted, "I have seen the Lord," the disciples' eyes popped open and they nodded their heads, some up and down, some right and left.

Fifth, the Risen Christ visits his disciples (19-31). The disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. They knew that the Jews had plotted and killed Jesus. They thought that now it was their turn (18:19). Peter had once been bold enough to say, "I will lay down my life for you" (13:37). Now he was full of fear, and so were the other disciples. They sat down terrified behind locked doors.

As they sat there, the Risen Christ was suddenly in their midst, though the door was locked. He said, "Peace be with you!" (19b) The Risen Christ gave them the peace of God, because they were fearful. This world is full of troubles and agonies of life which cause men to cry and sorrow, even Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Because of fear, many young people try to escape from the realities of life by means of adultery and perversion. There are many reasons why they become degenerate to the lowest degree. The main reason is that they are possessed by the evil spirit that makes them slaves to fear (Ro 8:15). A miracle happened when the disciples heard the voice of the Risen Christ. The power of death disappeared from their hearts. The peace of God came upon them and was overflowing from their hearts. It was a time of salvation for them. The Risen Christ is God who gives men the peace of God and the Holy Spirit. Here we learn that without believing in the glorious resurrection of Jesus, nobody experiences the peace of God.

Sixth, Jesus commissions them as missionaries (21-23). What did Jesus do for his disciples next? In verse 21 he said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." The Risen Christ commissioned them as missionaries. God sent his Son as the first missionary to this world to save men from their sins. The Son fulfilled his mission as the first missionary. As he was sent, the Risen Christ also sent his disciples

into the world as missionaries to spread the good news of eternal salvation.

But how could they go into the world when they were so fearful? The Risen Christ said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (22b). Even though they had followed Jesus, they had not yet received the independent Holy Spirit. There is a reason why Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit. The disciples' real problem was not the Jewish leaders, but fear itself working within them. The Risen Christ sent the Holy Spirit by breathing on them. Then the Holy Spirit, that is, the Spirit of Jesus, filled their hearts. When the Holy Spirit was with them, they could see the glorious Risen Christ who is God Almighty. They are now unutterably joyful.

Look at verse 23. "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." The main point of this verse is that we must proclaim the good news of great joy. In other words, we must win people over to Jesus so that their sins may be forgiven. Man has no authority to forgive others' sins. Only Jesus has authority to forgive sins. We cannot neglect this mission, because sin is not a way to human freedom, but the poison of the devil. The proclamation of the gospel is not a light matter. It is a mission to save men from eternal condemnation and to bring them back to the kingdom of God.

Seventh, Jesus appears to Thomas the doubter (24-30). Doubt is the most potent weapon of the devil. Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came the first time after his resurrection (24). When the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, he declared, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (25). Thomas was a man of doubt. Probably Thomas pretended that he was the most distinguished scientist, and that what the disciples said was untenable. A week later, when the disciples were in the house again, Thomas was with them. The doors were still locked (26). Even though Thomas had decided to doubt, in the hope of bringing him to his glorious kingdom, Jesus, in his unutterable grace, visited Thomas. The Risen Christ would go back to the Father to sit on his glorious throne, but he humbled himself and said, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side" (27a). Jesus embraced Thomas, who was poisoned by the doubt of Satan. The glorious Risen Christ let him reach out his hand and put it into his side. At the moment Thomas saw the wounds and scars in Jesus' hands and side, the Holy Spirit came upon him. He could see the glorious Risen Christ. He wanted to witness Jesus' death and resurrection to the whole world. So he shouted, "My Lord and my God!" (28) It meant, "I have seen the Risen Christ and he is King of kings and Lord of lords."

Look at verse 29. "Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'" Jesus added, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Thomas did not believe based on what Jesus said, but on what he, Thomas, had seen. But those who have believed, believing the word of God, are more blessed. Though they have not seen, they can see the Risen Christ in the word of God. They can experience the joy of heaven when they believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus did many

signs in the presence of his disciples to open their spiritual eyes to see that he is God who, through his death and resurrection, gives us eternal salvation and the kingdom of God as our inheritance (31).

The resurrection of Jesus liberates us from personal sorrow and sin and gives us the peace of God and his kingdom as our inheritance.