

# John 20:1-10

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's not hard to feel like we need good news, is it? If you've seen the news this morning, Egypt, airliner, hijacked in Lanarka and Cyprus.

! We've looked at the news over the weekend. I don't know if it's been the storms. I think of the bomb in Lahore. I think of the ongoing devastation in people's lives leading from the bombs last week in Belgium.

The ongoing hunt. And that's not even to mention our own personal situations. Maybe a bad diagnosis. Maybe a death in the family. The death of a loved one.

Or just difficulties and sadness you've lived with for years. We all need some good news, don't we? Perhaps you feel a little bit like Mary going to the tomb that morning.

It was still dark, John tells us. Emphasising the bleakness, the hopelessness of the situation. It was still dark. She was in confusion. She arrives and sees the stone rolled away.

[ 1 : 00 ] And does not know what has happened. She automatically thinks someone's taken Jesus' body. What she's longing for at this stage is just to see Jesus' body. To be with the body.

To take it away. Brings embalment if necessary. And then there's distress, isn't there? Where's this body gone? What has happened? And so she does the only thing she can think to do.

She runs to get help. She runs to the disciples. To Peter and John. And do you notice, as John tells us this story, we see their emotions as well. What do they do as Mary comes to them?

They run to the tomb. I'm not even sure they necessarily know what they're running for. Just think of all this emotion, all this grief, all this frustration. And now confusion.

Where's this body gone? But they're not really much help to Mary, are they? See what happens as they run to the tomb. We'll look at them and then we'll look at Mary. And then we'll look at what Jesus says to Mary at the end. So look, they both run to the tomb.

[ 2 : 01 ] I don't know how you imagine this. I imagine John to be the thinner one. Peter to be the big burly one. Of course, they're both fishermen. So John gets there fast first. He's the sprinter. Peter, a bit heavier, but he gets there eventually.

When John gets to the tomb, verses 4 and 5, he kind of holds back. He looks in. He reflects on what is going on. He sees the linen cloths, but doesn't go in. But Peter?

Well, it's characteristic Peter. He blunders straight in. He wants to see what's going on. Maybe he's a typical man. Mary's come to him with a problem. He wants to solve the problem. Where's this body gone?

So he goes into the tomb. He says he sees the face cloth. The face cloth that should be on Jesus' head. Not lying with the linen cloths, verse 7, but folded up by itself. What does Peter see?

Well, he doesn't see anything, in a sense, does he? He sees a problem that needs to be solved. What he doesn't realise yet, is that his greatest problem has been solved.

[ 3 : 03 ] Because Jesus has risen from the dead. What do you see, as you look at the resurrection story? Like Peter, do you see some bits of evidence which don't quite add up?

Do you see a problem that needs to be solved? Do you see a nice story that just gets told every year? Or do you see something more? See, some people approach Christianity a bit like Peter approached the tomb.

Run in, have a quick look, and then kind of go away without ever really having reflected on it, having ever really made sense of it. Just heading off again. I hear people say, I've tried that, I went to church for a while, I went to a camp as a kid.

I've tried Christianity. What do you make, if you look at the tomb? What do you think of it? There's a contrast between Peter and John here, isn't there? Peter blunders in and runs off again.

John, well, look at verse 8. The other disciple, that is John, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw, and he believed, for as yet, they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead.

[ 4 : 11 ] It's a funny way of putting it, isn't it? What did John believe? What did John believe? Well, he must have believed that Jesus had risen. That must be what he believed.

Later on in the chapter, we'll see that's part of what belief is about. And how did he come to believe it? Well, in a part, on the basis of what his eyes could see, he could see the folded grave clothes. No grave robber had done this. Because no grave robber would leave a face cloth nicely folded away from the others. So he must have believed that Jesus had risen.

But he didn't actually understand. What he's telling us here is actually you can believe that if you really understand what the Old Testament is about. You will understand that the Messiah, God's rescuer, must rise from the dead.

At this point, John, writing honestly, did not understand that. But he saw with his own eyes that the tomb was empty. And so he believed Jesus must have risen from the dead.

[ 5 : 08 ] And of course, he had Jesus' words echoing in his ears, no doubt. Jesus had told the disciples many times he'd rise from the dead. So, for example, back in chapter 10, verse 17, Jesus had said this, For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This is the charge I've received from my Father.

So perhaps as John is in that shadowy tomb on that first Easter morning, maybe those words are ringing in his ears as he sees the folded glazed clothes. So he believes Jesus has risen from the dead.

But he still doesn't understand why it was necessary for Christ to rise from the dead. Now, why is it important we think about that? I think it's important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we've got to remember these are normal men witnessing these events. They weren't pre-scientific simpletons as some people accused them of. John wasn't going to believe anything unless he had something to see.

[ 6 : 17 ] It wasn't that they naturally believed dead people came back to life. Of course they didn't. They're more familiar with people dying and staying dead than we are. They didn't have intensive care units and defibrillators and resuscitation techniques.

They knew that when people died they stayed dead. They were not gullible. But they had heard what Jesus had said. They'd heard Jesus say that while the world rejoices you will weep.

They just hadn't really understood. Now that can be encouragement to all of us. It may be you're looking into the Christian faith. It may be you've been a Christian for years and the things you just don't understand.

What do you see here? The apostle doesn't understand everything but he still believes. Saint Augustine said I believe in order to know. You can trust that Jesus is alive.

You can trust what the scriptures say even if you don't have everything taped down and understood. That is okay. Where's Peter and John? Peter who looks quickly runs away.

[ 7 : 20 ] John who reflects and believes without fully understanding. I wonder how Mary felt at that point. She'd gone to get them in her distress and when we read verse 11 or verse 10 they scarf her off home meanwhile Mary verse 11 stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she looked into the tomb.

So these disciples haven't been much help to her have they? She's still weeping she's still looking for Jesus' body she still doesn't understand what's happened and she still has no expectation of finding him alive.

So she looks into the tomb well verse 12 she sees two angels in white and they said to her verse 13 woman why are you weeping? Jesus then asked the same question why are you weeping?

That's exactly the kind of question my wife and I ask our children when they're all upset about something. Joel, why are you crying? Why are you crying? It's actually a gentle question to encourage them there's no reason to weep and that's how the angels and how Jesus is asking a question to Mary why are you weeping?

There is actually no reason to weep now as you will find out. Then Jesus asked her another question verse 15 whom are you seeking? Who are you seeking?

[ 8 : 34 ] Mary what is it that you're looking for that you hope will put an end to these tears? I guess if we could stop the camera there and ask Mary what are you looking for?

Well she would have told us I'm looking for Jesus' body that was the whole point of running to the disciples wasn't it? It's what she says to Jesus who she thinks is the gardener there in verse 15 Sir if you've carried him away tell me where you've laid him and I will take him away what she wants what she thinks she wants is the body of Jesus in her grief that would in doubt be a comfort maybe she wants to embalm his body with spices we read that in the other gospels she wants to do a last act of service for Jesus she thinks that will bring comfort but do you notice Jesus had something much better for her than that Jesus had something much better for her than that and I wonder how true that is for each one of us as well don't we often think I'll feel better I'll be comforted when dot dot dot how do you finish that sentence?

I'll feel better when I've got through this treatment I'll feel better when the kids are safely grown up and left school I'll feel better when the child is currently running away comes home I'll feel better how would you finish that?

see Jesus has a better way of ending those tears and wiping them up we see that way in verse 16 Jesus said to her Mary she turned and said to him in Aramaic Rabboni which means teacher what a moment you know how precious it is when someone you love calls your name someone perhaps you haven't even seen for a while someone hears your name being called by them you turn around it's a wonderful thing perhaps you think of a reunion after a long separation think how it was for Mary to hear the very words of the master speaking her name Mary now Matthew tells us that at this point Mary and there are probably other women there fell down at Jesus' feet and grabbed hold of him Matthew 28 verse 29 they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him they fell down prostrate before him no doubt that's what's going on it's a wonderful moment isn't it?

Mary doesn't understand everything but Jesus is alive and has spoken to her but as John tells this story he wants to focus us on what Jesus says next because this is where the good news lies for you and me this is where we can have our Mary moment as it were where we can fall down in worship at the feet of the risen saviour and know that one day not today but one day he will wipe every tear away when he returns John wants us to know this because he wants us to believe he tells us that at the end of the chapter let's go on and look at Jesus' response there in verse 17 Jesus said to Mary do not cling to me remember she's holding on to his feet for I have not yet ascended to the father but go to my brothers and say to them I am ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God what's Jesus saying?

[ 11 : 59 ] do not cling to me now Mary don't indulge in this don't just enjoy this spiritual experience you're having but I've got a job for you to do I'm going back to the father I'm not going just yet you'll see me again and everyone will see me one day but right now I've got a commission for you I've got a job for you so don't just enjoy your own private spiritual moment go and tell this good news to other people as well and for all of us who are Christians this good news that Mary has to announce is news for us if we've trusted in Jesus Christ this is good news for us and so the message for us is the same as it was for Mary don't just enjoy your spiritual high don't just enjoy your own spiritual moment with Jesus tell this good news to others tell it to yourself to other believers and to those who do not know I am ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God that's the good news message Jesus had for his disciples and throughout this gospel John has made it clear two things well a number of things where Jesus has come from and where he's going to so back in chapter 3

Jesus said John recalls Jesus whereas only I have come down from heaven and as we go through the gospel we read that Jesus is going to go back to the father as well now what does that mean for the disciples what does it mean for us who believe well as we tease out this my God and your God my father and your father I want us to see three things it means vindication welcome and renewal vindication welcome and renewal think about vindication first of all think about those poor disciples they followed Jesus around for three years they left their homes their families and their livelihoods to follow him and they'd just seen him three days earlier nailed to on a Friday nailed to a cross crucified under the desires of the religious leaders it looked like the religious leaders had won it looked like the God they served was the powerful one they must have the disciples must have worried have we got it all wrong?

have we wasted the last three years? have we misunderstood? have we misread Jesus? Jesus says I'm going back to my God and your God Jesus died as a humiliated criminal on a cross

hanging on a cross was a sign of being under God's curse as Deuteronomy tells us from the Old Testament he looked utterly despised and rejected by God and yet God has raised him to life so Jesus says he's my God and your God if you trust in me he is your God too you may feel oppressed you may feel downtrodden you may feel like a loser you may wonder whether this was worthwhile maybe even to us today we think maybe I shouldn't take Christianity too seriously especially given the way the world looks at those of us who are Christians fundamentalists idiots whatever the words are maybe maybe I shouldn't take it too seriously Jesus says no I've been raised from the dead I'm going back to my God and your God Jesus' resurrection is his vindication proof that the father loves the son proof that the father accepts the son proof that the humiliation of the son was for our sake so that we could become his children so Jesus says he's my God and your God if you trust in me and as the father has raised me from the dead so he will raise you from the dead so you will be vindicated too you're truly on God's side if you trust in Jesus you see why that's important in a society where people think all religions are equally valid in a society that thinks taking anything too seriously is just a bit silly in our own lives when it can be hard to be loyal to King Jesus we need to see the resurrection is the vindication of Jesus and therefore the vindication of all who trust in Jesus but John goes on Jesus goes on I'm attending to my father and your father my father and your father now let me make one thing clear here nobody has God as father unless they trust in Jesus nobody has God as father unless they trust in Jesus it is only in Jesus we can call God father we're all God's creatures we're all made in God's image but we're not all God's children in fact by nature we're children of wrath the new testament tells us by nature we're cut off from God it's only in Jesus that we can call God father now what are the implications of that let me draw up two first is we're welcomed by the father back in chapter 14 verse 6 Jesus famously said I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me there are all sorts of ways people try to get connected with God aren't there you get your eightfold path in Buddhism you get the five pillars of Islam you get the secular equivalence of being a nice upstanding person being tolerant and giving to charity and caring about the environment people do all these things to try and gain some sort of contact some sort of acceptance by God but Jesus says it's only if you're trusting in my life and death and resurrection that you can call God father

[17:34] I am the only way to the father Mohammed does not provide a way to the father Buddha does not Hinduism is not a way of being connected with the father being a nice moral person is not a way of being connected with the father it only comes through believing in Jesus it's only through Jesus we can call God father it's only through Jesus we are welcomed Jesus said through disciples in John 14 that he was going to the father but in his father's house there were many rooms he'd gone there to prepare a place for them and he'd come back and take them with him he's coming back for all who believe to give us a place in his father's house I was just staying a recent weekend in my mother-in-law's house it's always nice to go there we go to the guest room we always feel at home we're always welcomed it's a place where we can belong how much better to belong to be welcomed by our heavenly father because we received his son but there's a second implication of Jesus saying my father and your father what does it actually mean to be able to call God father what needs to happen in our lives in order to be able to call God father what is it that can make us children of God well

John tells us right back at the start of his gospel chapter 1 verse 12 he says to all who did receive Jesus to all who believed in his name that is to all who believed Jesus was who he said he was the eternal son of God come to die and rise again for sinners whoever believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God children who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man but of God how do we become how do we become God's children by believing and as we believe Jesus does something in us he changes us Christianity isn't merely about believing certain facts although it does include believing it isn't merely a matter of behaving in certain ways or it does affect our behaviour it isn't merely about having a certain ethical code although one will do that if one is following Jesus it is fundamentally about a change that happens within us as God by his spirit makes us his children gives us new life as he raised the son to new life in the resurrection so he can raise us to new life renewal inside of us making us new people it means complete renewal

God changes us from the inside out so as Jesus says to Mary go to my brothers those who are part of my family and say I'm ascending to my God and your God my father and your father he's telling us we can celebrate vindication if we trust in Jesus we are gods and he will vindicate us one day

entirely when Jesus returns it means welcome we're accepted and loved by the heavenly father and have a home with him forever and it means renewal he's changing us now making us new people see what difference that message made to Mary's life we contrast in the start and the end she turns up with tears she leaves with joy she arrives in darkness but her life is flooded with light as she leaves she came hopeless and leaves knowing she's a child of God who will one day be with Jesus forever now what difference does that make for us she'd make all sorts of differences shouldn't it I got an email yesterday I think it was from some friends of mine who work with or have dealings with those who work with Syrian refugees fleeing the whole horrible conflict in Syria we all know from our TV screens don't we how awful it is and yet some people fleeing that conflict have turned their back on Islam have risked the wrath of their family and their communities and have come to faith in Christ they might think that's like jumping from the frying pan into the fire yet these people say this the most important thing is that we know Jesus Christ as our saviour thank God for the war in Syria it brought us to Jesus thank God for the war in Syria it brought us to Jesus now that confounds my wisdom and yet isn't it true these poor persecuted people know they will be vindicated because Jesus is alive know they have a welcome from the father even when they're hated by their families know they have renewal now which enables them to rejoice in the midst of horrendous suffering that's what the difference the resurrection makes to them what difference does the resurrection make to me and to you let me pray for us thank you thank you