

Jesus Is Hope

John 20:1-18

SERIES “EASTER”

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“He arose. Hallelujah”

And because he arose, we have what the scripture calls a “living hope”. And that’s what I want to talk to you about today. I want to talk to you about the hope the resurrection brings.

We’re beginning a new series today we’re calling: **So, What? Why the Resurrection Matters**

And over the next five weeks, we are going to look at some of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in scripture. Depending on how you organize the parallel accounts of the resurrection in the gospels, scripture gives us around 10-12 post resurrection accounts.

Many of these post-resurrection appearances are related to us by eye-witnesses! And these appearances of Jesus are the single greatest evidence we have that the resurrection IS a historical fact and that it actually occurred.

Today, we’re going to look at the very first post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. It’s found in John’s gospel. I’m titling this message: **Jesus Is Hope**

Now, we Houstonians know about HOPE. Baseball season is here and we’re HOPING the Stros bring back a championship to H-town!

Some of you have Easter Egg hunts planned after church today, and your kids are HOPING to find some eggs with good candy in it...and if you are one of those family that puts money in the eggs, you’re ratcheting up the HOPE factor significantly.

If there is ANYTHING the world needs today, it’s hope.

- We’re in this conflict with Iran. Tensions are high, and it seems like one misstep, and we could be in World War III. We’re HOPING that doesn’t happen.
- I got a phone call this week from a friend who went into the hospital and there were some complications and he is now on a ventilator fighting for his life and what he and his family are clinging to more than anything is HOPE.
- I mentioned on Friday evening our team going into prison and sharing the love of Jesus with inmates. And you know what these men were looking for and needing more than anything we could give them was HOPE.

It’s been said, “**Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope.**”

HOPE – this is what this first post-resurrection appearance is all about! Let’s read the scripture and then I’ll come back and make some comments and points as we reflect on what we read.

John 20:1-18 – “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. (nice of you to include that point, John...I would have to if I was writing the gospel just to stick it to Peter...it’s etched in scripture forever – I am faster than you!)

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 (in case you missed it the first time...I got there first! Details matter I guess!), **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.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.

¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them,

“They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, 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.’”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.”

The first point I want to make this morning is: **Jesus is hope from our past**

The main person in this text besides the risen Christ is, Mary. She is the first person to see the empty tomb. She was the first person to speak to Jesus after he was raised from the dead. She was the first person chosen to share about his resurrection with others.

And if you know anything about Mary, she was the most unlikely candidate to be following Jesus in the first place much less being the first one to testify to his resurrection.

She is called Mary Magdalene...NOT because that is her last name, but that is where she was from – Magdala.

Magdala was a small little blue-collar fishing community on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Recently, there have been some excavations done there and on the historic site is a beautiful chapel. When we make our trips to the Holy Land, Magdala is one of the many places we go.

We're first introduced to Mary in Luke's gospel. He writes in:

Luke 8:1-2 – “Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.”

Some believe that this Mary of Magdala is the prostitute that is mentioned in (Luke 7), but there isn't really any biblical evidence for that. What we do know is that she was a woman that knew pain.

Can you imagine the darkness in her life being filled with seven demons...tormented on a daily basis by evil spirits?!

My goodness, one evil spirit is enough! SEVEN. What a tortured soul she must have been. We're talking about hope today...I can't imagine the HOPELESSNESS she must have felt in her life. Filled with demons...did they:

- Make her sick?
- Lead her into depression?
- Cause her to feel insane?

Probably ALL of the above and MORE...but then Jesus changes her life.

Now, we don't have record of when, but we know that he changed her...transformed her...kicked the demons out and she followed him the rest of his life.

She followed him so closely that she is mentioned at being near to the cross as Jesus was dying! All the gospels mention this. Listen to John's account:

John 19:25 – “but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”

When all the other disciples tucked tail and ran...hid out in fear for their lives, Mary Magdalene was right there...right beside Jesus's mother...AND...she was the first one at the tomb on that Sunday morning.

The scripture says (v. 5) that she came to the tomb early, while it was “still dark”.

John uses the word “darkness” not just to describe the time in which Mary went, but throughout his writings, it’s used as a theological symbol if you will. It’s as if John is saying, she appears at the tomb when it was still hopeless...it was dark.

But when she gets there and gets close to the tomb, she sees that the stone had been taken away. It had been rolled back from where it was originally set in place.

Now, just think about this! Mary, the FIRST eyewitness to the empty tomb...in her past - was a demon-possessed wretch.

Listen: You may not be like Mary and at one time been filled with demons, but ALL of us have a past. And the truth is you could be here and think to yourself that somehow your past disqualifies you from being a recipient of God’s love and grace and mercy.

- Maybe it was an addiction of some kind that has led to a life of regret. Your life was FULL of bondage and slavery to some form of substance abuse or alcohol or prescription meds...
- Or maybe it was pornography or gambling...I don’t know what it is...
- It could be an addiction to work, and you neglected your family and made some horrendous decisions that truthfully, you are still living with the consequences of those choices today and it haunts you...
- Maybe your past is filled with failure in your eyes. A marriage failed. A business failed. You’ve made promises to God and routinely broken them – you just feel like a total failure.

I don’t know what’s in your past that is eating at you and has you living in a cycle of shame, thinking the Lord has somehow washed his hands of you, but I’m telling you what we learn in Mary being the first eyewitness to the empty tomb is that Jesus is hope from your past.

I LOVE that the FIRST person to see the empty tomb was NOT a:

- Pharisee...one schooled in the law and knew the scripture up and down and had all the degrees hanging on the wall...
- Disciple from the inner circle...one of the three that got to see some pretty amazing things in the earthly ministry of Jesus like him raising the dead or being at the Transfiguration...

Instead...the first person that witnesses the resurrection was a woman – in that day, they didn’t have very many rights! And it wasn’t just a woman...it was a woman with a past. Might have been a prostitute...for sure a woman who knew brokenness and darkness.

And just as Jesus was hope from her past...he’s hope from your past too however it may be defined and whatever may be in your rearview mirror.

With the resurrection, there is hope. Secondly, this passage teaches: **Jesus is hope in our present**

Mary doesn't understand what she sees. This is why she goes back and gets Peter and John. They run to the tomb (John wins the race...he doesn't want us to forget that), and when they look in, they see the linen cloths lying there, the face cloth that would have been wrapped around his head or placed on his head was folded neatly and put into place.

I love the scripture gives that detail. What's the lesson there? Kids, Jesus folded his cloths, you can fold yours! Ha!

That's NOT the lesson. There really isn't any strong conclusion as to why this detail is added. It could just be further evidence that this was not a theft of a body...grave robbers don't take the time to fold cloths.

Jesus was alive...in total control of the situation.

Mary doesn't understand though...and it makes sense. Even though Jesus told his followers on numerous occasions that he was going to be put to death AND rise again no one could really have imagined this. Dead people don't just come back to life!

Mary is heartbroken. She saw Jesus give up his spirit. She was at the cross. She saw the nails go in and the spear pierce his side. She saw him die. AND she followed him to where he was buried!

Matthew 27:57-61 – “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.

⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud

⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.”

Mary saw Jesus die. She saw his body put in the tomb. And now she comes early Sunday morning to pay her respects and the body Jesus is nowhere to be found...and she weeps!

John 20:11-16 – “But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb (this is loud weeping here ...this is anguish...this is NOT quiet crying), and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.

¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” (a physical resurrection is still not registering with her!)

¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. (Could have been that he kept her from seeing him...could have been just turning

light and with tears she didn't realize it was him...could have been that his resurrected body had a degree of glory that kept her from recognizing him. I think she – in her mind KNEW Jesus was dead, and the thought of it being him even if it looked like him, wasn't enough to allow her brain to register that it was Jesus. It wasn't until he spoke to her and more specifically says her name that she puts it all together.)

15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).”

It was Jesus saying her name that changed everything for her. The Greek text uses her Aramaic name – “Mariam”. There was a certain tenderness to this moment.

Illus. “Saying names” – You know, there something about hearing your own name.

Dale Carnegie wrote in this best-selling book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* – **“A person’s name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”**

And let's be honest...it's not just in hearing your name, it's in the tone in which your name is said. Debbie can turn my day in how she says, “Jarrett”. If it's soft and tender – “Jarrett”. Well...it may just be a good day. If it's sharp and abrupt “Jarrett.” Oh no, what'd I do?!

I think Jesus in calling Mary's name...and the tenderness in which he said it snapped her into focus and into reality. This is (John 10 playing out in real time. Do you remember that passage of scripture?

Jesus is speaking and he uses the object lesson of a sheep and a shepherd to describe his relationship with his people.

John 10:3b, 14, 27 – **“...The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”**

Illus. Voicemails - I don't know what this says about me, but I bet there are some people here who have lost loved ones. And you still keep their old voicemails and play them back every now and then, just to hear the person's voice.

And as you listen to it, it puts you right back there with them. It's powerful to listen to their voice...the memories is brings with it...hearing the person's voice makes you remember the person even more...at a deeper level.

I do this...some of you do this on your phone. Can you imagine hearing that person's voice in real life again. You'd know exactly who it was talking to you.

Mary went from grief and despair to joy and wonder in a moment...at the very sound of her name she KNEW.

- She WAS in agony...
- She WAS weeping loudly...
- She WAS crying out, thinking someone stole the body of her Lord...

And in one second of hearing her name, Jesus changed her present circumstances and gives her hope. One word – her name – brought hope and changed her present state of mind, emotions...her very life.

I'll come back to this at the end of our time together. Let's look finally at how: **Jesus is hope for our future**

In this passage, Jesus doesn't just show himself to Mary and leave. He gives her a mission.

John 20:17-18 – “Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, 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.’”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.”

Jesus changed Mary's life forever. His resurrection changed the disciples forever...NOT just their lives but their eternity - and this what he does for me and you!

Easter is ALL about the HOPE of a future...a future of us living with God forever and ever. This is what the resurrection secures!

If he didn't raise from the dead – Paul writes in (1 Cor. 15:19) - if there is no resurrection:

- then our faith is futile...
- what we are doing here today is in vain...
- it's empty and useless...
- and we are of all people to be pitied...

In other words, we have NO FUTURE...BUT...Jesus did raise from the dead, and because of this we have hope from our past, hope in our present and we have hope for our future. In fact, the Bible calls Jesus our “blessed hope”. Listen to the verse in the New Testament book called, Titus. It covers what we've talked about today: our past, our present and our future!

Titus 2:11-13 – “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
(past)

¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, (present)

¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (future).”

Jesus made a promise to his disciples, “I will rise from the dead”. Told them this on at least FOUR different occasions. And as we have noted today, he came through on his promise. He kept his word.

Do you know how many times Jesus promised that he was coming again? Over TWENTY times. He’s going to keep his word...the FIRST resurrection proves this! And when he comes again, we will live with him forever – that’s our future hope.

The question we must answer today – EVERY single one of us is, “Do you have this hope?”

- It’s NOT wishful thinking...it’s a confident assurance.
- It’s NOT an idea...HOPE is a person.

His name is Jesus. And if you will look to him by faith he will do for you what he did for Mary all those years ago. He’ll call you by name and give you hope from your past, hope in your present and hope for a future.

Would you bow your heads in prayer with me?

Here’s what we are going to do...and we do this every Easter week. We give people an opportunity to respond to what God may be speaking to their heart in this moment. And I believe we have MANY in this room who RIGHT NOW, Jesus is calling by name.

I don’t know your story, but I know there are many here who came and if you are honest, you walked in with little to no hope.

- Your handcuffed to your past.
- There’s no sense of peace or joy in your present.
- There’s ZERO hope for a future.

What I want you to hear today...in this moment is what Mary heard all those years ago. I want you to hear Jesus speaking your name. You may not hear it audibly, but if Jesus is calling you to salvation today, you’ll hear him speaking your name in your heart – and trust me on this: it’s louder than any audible voice you’ve ever heard.

Hear him calling your name. If you’ve never put your faith and trust in Christ, receive HOPE today by receiving Jesus into your life. We say around here it’s as simple as your ABC’s.

A – Admit you’re a sinner

B – Believe in Jesus – his death and resurrection

C – Confess him as Lord

If you want to receive this Hope...if you want to receive Jesus in your life today...you know he is calling your name, I’m going to ask you to pray a prayer with me.

There is nothing magical or mystical about this prayer. It's your humility and faith that God sees and it's the cry of your heart that he hears. If you want to believe in Jesus and give him your life today, I want you to pray in your heart and mean this prayer I am putting on the screen right now:

“Jesus, I know I’m a sinner and need a Savior. I believe you are my only Hope. I ask you to forgive my sin and be Lord of my life. I believe you died on a cross. I believe you were buried and raised back to life, and I place my trust in you today. Thank you for giving me hope from my past, hope in my present, and hope for a future. Amen.”

Now, if you prayed that prayer with me, it's the greatest decision you will ever make...you made the right choice!

And now I'm going to ask you to make another decision...and that is to make your receiving of Jesus public and in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to stand.

We do this all the time around here and here's what is going to happen. Our church wants to celebrate your decision. The Bible pictures heaven as a big party...even saying when one comes to know Jesus all of heaven rejoices! A party is being thrown!

And today because HOPE has been found...there is so much joy...so much excitement...we're joining in on that heavenly a party!

And so, for those of you who prayed with me that prayer...you repeated in your heart and meant it, we want to celebrate...like it's your birthday party and in a very real way, it is! It's your spiritual birthday.

And so here is what I'm going to ask you to do: I'm going to pray and then I'm going to ask you to stand...and by standing you are saying, I prayed with you, Jarrett and gave my life to Jesus.

PRAY.

So here we go...on the count of three. No waiting...no looking around...by faith you have asked Jesus for life and by faith you are going to stand and let us celebrate with you. Ready?

1...2...3...Stand!

Church, stand with them

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.