

Gospel John #15

Belonging, Authority, Mission

John 20:1-30

Eric Cepin
3-31-24 (Easter Sunday)

He is risen! The resurrection is a little weird: we are talking about a guy killed on a tree, crucified as a Messiah. The reason we talk about him is because he was raised from the dead. Everything you understand about morals and what is good and right goes back to this. For example, consider the Hamas war right now: we are having conversations about what is a just and moral war because of the resurrection. If you turn on the news, you hear of another church leader caught in sin. We care about this because of the resurrection. Everything rests on the resurrections.

Jesus tells Martha that He IS the resurrection. We must deal with this topic!

Another disruption: if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, you should be a stoic or a buddhist or hedonist and NOT follow Jesus. He said nothing and value and cannot even be considered a good teacher if he didn't actually rise from the dead. If anyone tells you Jesus was a good teacher or a good man, it isn't true He didn't rise from the dead. You MUST start here; you MUST think about this and wrestle with.

Another thing to think about: we know historically Jesus existed. We have more evidence that Jesus existed than we do for Alexander the Great. We know Jesus lived and that there was an empty tomb. Most historians say we don't know WHAT happened but we know that 6 months after he died, there was a group of people who were willing to give their lives and their money for the truth that Jesus died and rose from the dead.

You have to keep wrestling with the resurrection.

I Cor 15:12:

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **13** If there is no resurrection of the dead,

then not even Christ has been raised. **14** And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Ponder this! What you believe is useless without the resurrection.

You heard **John 20** read earlier (and copied below): Coming to it this time, I have three words to ponder:

1. **Belonging**
2. **Mission**
3. **Authority**

If you don't have these three words, you are **depressed** because you don't have **peace**. **Belonging** brings peace. When I know what I should be doing (**mission**), there is peace. When I know that I have the **authority** to do something, it brings peace.

The tomb: Easter is a dark hole that kind of describes where I am at Easter and where



Mary was. Picture at 3 a.m. on Sunday going with other women to care for Jesus's body. We don't know if she immediately looked in the tomb, but in this story, her immediate reaction is to run. The stone is rolled away: She thinks Jesus has been mutilated or stolen.

I also can have the **empty tomb feeling**: The world and my own subconscious say, "Hey, you don't actually belong. Your purpose isn't very big. You don't have a right to do anything or the authority to figure it out." This is sometimes my narrative and I bring this to Easter.



Mary RUNS: she goes to the disciples and tells them what she has found. John and Peter, who was probably biggest and older than John, run to the tomb to investigate and find out that things were laid out in a certain way. He hasn't made the connection

yet that Jesus was going to rise from the dead.

Mourning
Resignation
Belief

Mary Magdala is **mourning**. Magdala is a fishing village and means “fish tower,” a place where people could spot fish in a lake. Jesus nicknamed her “Mary, the tower.” She is a tower of strength and is present at the cross. All she has is loss and meaninglessness with no closure. The man who delivered her from 7 demons is not in the tomb. She weeps.

After the crucifixion, Peter may have experienced **resignation**. He goes home, returns to fishing, and says to his wife that he had wasted the past 3 years. They just didn’t realize what Jesus said about the resurrection.

John believes but his **belief** had no power.



Mary has a conversation with an angel and then she thinks the gardener shows up. She wants to go get Jesus. Then he says her name and sends her on a **mission**:

Jesus knows that **belonging** comes from first being **vulnerable**: *He doesn't say, "Mary, it's me."* Instead, he begins by asking her what is going on with her; he asks her to be vulnerable and **THEN** he says her name. When I say a name, my intonation

would tell you if you were in trouble or that I love you. Jesus's tone says she **belongs**. But he doesn't leave her there; He gives her a **mission**: *Go tell the others.*

Notice that Jesus just sent a *woman* on the very first apostolic mission. At that time, women were not reliable. *It would not have been a good idea to give a woman this most important mission.* He tells her she **belongs**, he gives her a **mission**, and he gives her the **power** to do the mission.



The brothers, on the other hand, were more fearful of the Romans, the Jewish leaders. They have secret meetings in a locked room and Jesus just shows up (Jesus has a bit of Jedi in him with his ability to get into locked

spaces.) He says, "PEACE." What does this mean? Absence of war? No, it's not the peace the world gives.

Notice that Jesus gave them what he also gave Adam and Even in Eden: **Belonging**, **Mission**, and **Authority**. In Genesis 1, they are made in God's image, He tells them to be fruitful and multiply and he gives them authority to subdue the earth.

If you suffer from anxiety, I invite you to contemplate the resurrection and where you are in these three spaces: How do I feel when it comes to belonging? How do I understand my purpose? Do I have power or not? These are the three areas that push on FEAR.

The disciples were hanging out with Jesus before he died and knew that:

- they belonged
- had purpose
- had power

When Jesus died, these things seemed to leave them. Therefore, when he sees them after the resurrection, Jesus immediately restores these: First he says, "Peace (belong to Me)" then he says I'm going to breathe the HS on you and give you power and authority, even to say who is forgiven. This was a picture of what would happen in Acts to others; He was telling them first that they were the **foundation of the church**.

They responded with joy and found Thomas, the one disciple who wasn't there. Thomas was a class modernist: Perhaps he had visited the tomb and even though he saw it was empty, he didn't believe it. He DOUBTED. Jesus appears again for his benefit. He tells him to **stop doubting**. Jesus then turns to the camera (in a sense) and says "blessed are those who believe and don't see." The invitation is to be blessed. Any time someone says this to you, they are telling you they **belong** and have purpose and meaning and the **power** to execute it. You don't need to doubt.

The invitation of the resurrection is to step into **belonging** to Jesus and his **mission** and the **authority** he gives you for this mission. He ends this chapter saying the reason he wrote the book:

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

If you are unwilling to embrace the resurrection, you are living a zombie life! These words are useless without the resurrection. The invitation is what we are all forced to reckon with. That is why 2.6 billion people right now on this planet are celebrating the resurrection.

I want to offer you something now: When you think about what is happening in your life, maybe you are mourning, maybe there is sadness. I would invite you to join Mary and **hear Jesus speak your name**. Walking with Jesus is an opportunity to hear your name with a tone that says you belong. That is done in the context of community. Your tears have meaning: Jesus weeps for your pain and struggles and longs to say your name and have you belong.

Maybe you are up to your ears in babies: Sometimes parents look at their little ones and wonder if there really is a **mission** in life. Without the resurrection, all there is is potty training and meaninglessness. With the resurrection, every moment is a **mission** as your children grow. Understand that you don't have to huddle in a room, afraid.

Most people think they have no **authority**: it may feel like our bodies rule us and we really have no impact on anyone. Jesus says he has **power** in your life: the **mission** is to tell people they **belong**: your kids, your spouse, your neighbors. You have **authority**, God's **authority** through Jesus. This is what life is all about: the resurrection gives us meaning.

If I question and feel that things are meaningless, Jesus says to me, "STOP, get off the train." The tomb is empty; even if no one else tells you that you have **power** and **authority**, **Jesus does**. No other voice has power to rule over you. Jesus is the **ONLY** one who can tell us this. Life has a point because there is life after death. We will live fully in our bodies and

John 20

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. **2** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. **4** Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, **7** as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. **8** Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. **9** (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) **10** Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12** and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? 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."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "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."

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **27** Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **31** But these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.