John Ch19v38-Ch20v18 - I Have Seen The Lord!

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[0:00] Good morning, everybody. It's nice to see you today. I invite you to get a Bible. If you haven't! got a Bible, you can get one as you came in, or you can just listen. That's okay, too. But we're going to be looking at John's Gospel. I think if you're using one of the red covered Bibles or blue, it's on page 1088.

1,088. John is one of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And we're going to read in just a moment. So if you could have your Bibles open, John chapter 19 on page 1088.
Thanks to Ralph for leading this morning and reminding us that today, Easter Sunday, is when we celebrate the bodily resurrection of Jesus.
Now, that's good news, because it's not just the experience of Jesus. The Bible tells us that if we trust in the resurrection of Jesus, if we trust in him, too, we, too, can be raised from the dead to enjoy eternal life in God's eternal kingdom.
So we're going to read this morning, the account of the resurrection, and then we're going to think together about what its message is to us today.
[1:45] So John 19, starting at verse 38, this is a record, an account of the burial and resurrection of Jesus.

So starting at verse 38. Later, so this is after the crucifixion of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus.
Now, Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.
He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 35 kilograms.
Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices in strips of linen. This was in accordance with the Jewish burial customs.
[2:57] At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden. And in the garden was a new tomb which no one had ever been laid.

Because it was the Jewish day of preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. So early on the first day of the week, so Jesus was crucified on the Friday, it is now Sunday. So 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.
So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. That's John, the actual author of the gospel.
So two disciples, Simon Peter and John. And said, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb. And we don't know where they have put him.
[4:06] So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running. But the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb.
He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen strips.
Finally, the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went inside. He saw and believed.
But still, they didn't understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying.
[5:19] As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb. And saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been. One at the head and the other at the foot.

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They asked her, Woman, why are you crying? They've taken my Lord away, she said. And I don't know where they've put him.
At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, Woman, why are you crying?
Who is it that you're looking for? Thinking it was the gardener, she said, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.
Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, a local language, Rabboni, which means teacher.
[6:28] 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.

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.
Now, before we think about what this story, this account has to say to us today, I'm just going to pray a short prayer for us.
Let's pray. Our Father, will you please open the eyes of our heart that we might see the risen Jesus and understand what that means for us today.
Amen. I wonder if you notice that something happened to Mary. At the beginning of the account, Mary arrived at the tomb and is looking for a dead Jesus.
[7:51] But at the end of the account that we read, Mary claims to have seen the risen Jesus. So the question is, what happened to Mary to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead?

What caused her to believe in the resurrection? Well, to help us answer that question, we're going to look at three things this morning. We're going to think about the missing body, then we're going to look at the credible witnesses, and then we're going to look at a changed life.
So the missing body, credible witness, and a changed life. So first, let's think about this missing body.
Mary arrives at the tomb where Jesus had been placed. People were buried, usually in a hole where they had cut into the rock, and a large big stone would have been put in front of the entrance. And Mary has arrived there. But something is drastically wrong. Verse 1 of chapter 20 tells us that not only has this big, big stone been removed, there's no body.
[9:11] So verse 2, she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, they've taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they've put him.

Her conclusion is simply that the body of Jesus has either been taken or been stolen. Someone has moved the body.
Now notice, Mary doesn't think to herself as she arrives at the tomb, oh, it's the resurrection. It's happened. Jesus is alive.
And she doesn't go running to the disciples to tell them, hey guys, Jesus is alive. He's been raised from the dead. No, the only conclusion Mary comes to is someone has either stolen the body of Jesus or taken it away.
There's no suggestion from Mary at all that a resurrection has taken place. So what happened to Jesus?
[10:23] What happened to the body? Now I think that's a question we all need to think about this morning. Whether we've thought about it before or we just dismiss it out of hand.

what happened the body of Jesus? There was a tomb and there was a body in it but now there's the tomb and it's empty.
What happened? Well, the writers of the gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the primary sources that we have for this resurrection, all claim that it was a physical resurrection, that Jesus' resurrection was a bodily resurrection, that he physically walked out of the tomb.
Now I don't know what you think about that but not everybody believes that. There are many scholars today that believe the gospel writers have got it all wrong, that it's just made up, that it's not true.
At best they'll say it's just an invented story that gathered legs and it's been rumoured ever since. So there's one scholar by the name of Bart Ehrman, he's a New Testament scholar and he explained the resurrection like this.
[11:52] He said some of them referring to the disciples began to say that God had intervened and brought Jesus back from the dead. The story caught on and some of his closest followers came to

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think that in fact he had been raised.

So somebody started a rumour and the rumour has been spreading ever since all these years later. What do you think of that?
Either Jesus was raised or he wasn't. it's just a made up story. So who's right? Well we want to listen to the witnesses of the resurrection.
The credible witnesses and that's what the gospels do. They provide us with credible witnesses.
There's at least three reasons from this account that we have here that tells us why we can believe that Jesus was actually physically raised from the dead.
Let's look at the three different evidences that we have. First there's John and the strips of linen. So some people will claim the body was stolen.
[13:20] Thieves came along pushed back the great big stone and they stole the body or that the disciples came along and they took the body so it looked like a resurrection.

But look at what John sees when he arrives at the tomb. We find out in verse 5. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but didn't go in.
Now what does this tell us that there's strips of linen lying there? Well we've just said that somebody may have stolen the body because grave robbing or tomb raiding were quite common at that particular time.
The linen strips that were wrapped around the body with all those spices, well they were worth a lot of money. So if you were robbing a grave you would take the strips of linen and you would leave the body behind.
But in this account it's completely reversed and flipped. It's the other way around. The strips are left the most expensive items and the body is gone.
[14:40] It doesn't make sense. Why would you take a corpse and leave the most expensive items if you were robbing a grave?

You see the suggestion is that no one stole the body but that Jesus was actually raised. So there's John and the strips of linen.
Then there's the other disciple Peter and the burial cloth. Verse 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him, behind John, and went straight into the tomb.
And he saw the strips of linen lying there too, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head.
The cloth was still lying in its place separate from the linen. So there we can imagine Peter running into the tomb and there he sees these strips of linen lying where the body was and also the cloth that was wrapped around Jesus' head and he says in great detail it was lying in its place separate from the linen.
[16:05] Now why this intricate detail? Well it seems that the way the strips of linen are lying and the way the cloth for the head has been placed are all suggesting that it contained a body but now there is no body.

In other words there was a body that was wrapped up by these strips and by this cloth around the head but now those strips of linen are empty.
You see no one moved the body. Jesus was raised. So we have John and the strips of linen, Peter who goes into the tomb and sees the cloth around Jesus' head and then the third piece of evidence is Mary herself who sees the risen Jesus.
John introduces us to Mary Magdalene who is the key witness in this account and she claims that she has seen the risen Jesus.
In verse 18 it tells us Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, I have seen the Lord.
Now the only problem with that is in the first century a woman's evidence was not counted.
[17:33] One writer explains it like this, women were thought by educated men to be gullible in religious matters and especially prone to superstitious fantasy and excessive religious practices.

That was how people considered the evidence or the account of a woman. They would never give evidence in court, it just wasn't accepted.
It would work against you. So why on earth if you were making up a story about a resurrection why would you have a woman as the first eyewitness account?
It wouldn't help your case at all. So the only plausible reason for including Mary's testimony is because she actually was the first person to have seen the risen Jesus.

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And that's why John records it. Now I wonder what you think about that evidence, what John saw, what Peter saw, what Mary saw.
[18:49] Well I never met my grandfather on my mother's side. he had died eight years before I was born.

I've never met him but I have every reason to believe he is a real person. I don't have film footage, there's no voice recordings, there's no Facebook account or Instagram account that he was on.
I just have the eyewitness accounts of my mother and my father who have told me stories about him. And I have a newspaper article about an award he won for his garden.
So although I've never seen Francis Walton Edwards, I look at all the evidence and I come to the conclusion that yes, it's true.
And John, the author of the gospel, is providing us with evidence, not that Jesus was just a real person who lived way back in history, but he's giving us eyewitness accounts so that we can believe in the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus.
[20:06] It's something factual, something historical. In fact, John himself believed the evidence. Did you see that in verse 8? After Peter had gone into the tomb, the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went inside.

He saw and believed. But, verse 9, they still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.
Yes, they'd come to believe. Yes, they weigh up the evidence. Jesus has been raised. But what does it all mean? You might say, well, so what?
He was raised from the dead. What does that mean for you and for me? Well, let's follow Mary's encounter with the risen Jesus and we will see that this missing body, where we now have credible evidence for a resurrection changes people's lives.
Look at the life changing impact the resurrection had on Mary. We're going to consider five things about the account of Mary that impact and affect us as well.
[21:33] First, notice the despairing loss of Mary. In verse 11, we're told that Mary stood outside the tomb crying.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.
They asked her, woman, why are you crying? Now, doesn't that sound very insensitive and very unloving?
If you saw somebody in a cemetery crying, you don't need to ask them, why are you crying? We know the reason why they're crying.
Because for most of us, we've been there too. Death hurts. Death robs us of our loved ones and death steals away our joy.
[22:32] Mary is struggling with a despairing loss. Her close friend Jesus is gone. He's dead. And to add to her grief, there's no body.

There's nowhere to come. You see, death confronts us all with this agonizing grief. And there is nothing we can do to stop it.
Death comes to us all. And like it was for Mary, death can leave us with a deep despairing loss. Maybe that's what you've experienced as you've watched a loved one go. The aching, heartbreaking agony of a deep despairing loss.
loss. But not only was there despairing loss for Mary, there was a spiritual blindness. In verse 14, as she's asked about what happened, she says, why have they taken the Lord away?
[23:45] She says, I don't know where they've put him. At this, Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't realize that it was Jesus.

Now, Mary isn't blind, and she's not stupid either. She sees Jesus, but she doesn't actually realize it's Jesus.
In fact, verse 15 tells us she thinks Jesus is the gardener, the one who looks after the area. She sees, but she doesn't actually see.
Yes, she sees the empty tomb, and she sees the strips of cloth, but Mary can't see what it all means.
She's got spiritual blindness to the resurrected Jesus. She's stuck in despairing loss. She has no hope, and she has no joy.

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[24:45] She's blind to what has happened. Now, that can be true for lots of people. we can know information about Jesus, we can learn about things he did and things he said, but we are spiritually blind to what the resurrection actually means.

So, despairing loss, spiritual blindness, and the third thing we learn from Mary is about God's gracious revelation.
Look at verse 16. Jesus said to her, Mary, she turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher.
Now, there's two ways for us to think about how Mary recognized Jesus. First, you could think, well, it must have been the way that Jesus said Mary.
It was that kind of accent that Jesus had, and it was just the way he said it. Mary, Mary, for whatever way he said it, it was just something he said that Mary goes, oh, it's Jesus.
[26:09] That's one possible way of thinking about it. But there's another way to think about it, and I think this is what John wants us to grasp. When Jesus says Mary, however he said it, it was a personal call of the risen Jesus.

In other words, it was his gracious intervention in her life that opens her spiritual eyes that reveals Jesus to Mary.
you see, all of us are born blind to who Jesus is. As we've said, we can know information about him, but that's the extent as it goes.
And unless Jesus opens up our spiritual eyes, or the eyes of our hearts, we will never truly understand who Jesus is.
We must have a personal encounter with the risen Jesus. I'm not saying a face-to-face one-on-one with the physical Jesus right here and now, but that our eyes would be open, the eyes of our heart, to spiritually see and know who he is.
[27:29] And that's what's happening now. Through this written and recorded eyewitness account of the resurrection, the risen Jesus, through his word, today in 2026, is calling us by name.

Johnny, listen to me. Trust me. Know who I am. Now, if you have never ever had an encounter with the risen Jesus, I encourage you to ask him to open up your spiritual blind eyes, open up the eyes of my heart, so that I might see and understand who Jesus is.
So, despairing loss, spiritual blindness, joyful intimacy. You see, once Mary can truly see, she hugs Jesus with all of her might.
She wants to be with him and never leave him. Do you see that in verse 17? Jesus said, do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.
Mary, understandably, wants Jesus to say, she doesn't want him to leave, she wants to be with him forever, but Jesus interrupts her and says, Mary, don't hold on to me, because I must ascend to the Father.
[29:17] Why does Jesus have to go to the Father? Well, when Jesus goes to be with the Father, he's going to send the Spirit to his people.

Go back with me to John chapter 14. Just a few pages back, John chapter 14. And verse 15.
John chapter 14, verse 15. Jesus is speaking to the disciples. this is before he has been crucified and buried and he's teaching them and he says, if you love me, keep my commands.
And I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth.
truth. Well, who's the Spirit of Truth? Well, let's go back down to verse 23. Jesus replied, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.
[30:35] My Father will love them and we, that's Jesus and the Father, will come to them and make our home with them.

Isn't that incredible? Let's go back to chapter 20. Jesus is saying, the Spirit will be sent by the Father and the Son so that we might have fellowship with the Father and the Son.
By the Spirit, if we are trusting in him, we can enjoy the love of the Father and the love of the Son. There will never be a moment where we will be without him.
They will make their home in us. You see, when Mary was hugging Jesus, she had him for that moment in time.
But Jesus could go and walk anywhere and then he wouldn't actually be with Mary. But because he goes to the Father, he sends the Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, so that they could be with Mary forever.

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[31:55] Look at the end of verse 17. Jesus says to Mary, go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

God the relationship that Jesus has with God the Father can also be our relationship.
God is no longer some distant, absent being away out there, but through and by the resurrection, he is present with us, giving joy and hope and life.
You see, when our spiritual eyes are opened, when the risen Jesus graciously reveals himself to us, we enter into an unending, unbreakable, joyful intimacy with the Father and the Son.
So a joyful intimacy leads finally to a new purpose in our life, a new purpose for our life.
[33:11] Mary's life has been transformed. There's literally a joyful step in her run. Verse 18, Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, I have seen the Lord.

And what good news it was, before she was weeping, she was crying, she was in a state of deep despairing loss, confronted with this death, there was no hope, but now she's seen the risen Lord.
There is confident hope. Jesus, who died on the cross on the Friday, was buried and is raised to life, is now with us forevermore as we place our trust in him.
By his resurrection, Jesus has crushed death to death, he has destroyed the grave, defeated our enemy, the sting is removed and despair is gone.
He comes to us to offer us life in all its fullness. us. Now, of course, none of this is saying that that means now death is easy.
[34:30] No, there's a sense in which Mary was right to grieve because death breaks what is special and it ruins what is good.

Death will always be a painful curse. Yet we know that in our suffering we have the Spirit of God, the Father and the Son living within us to bring us and embrace us with their love and comfort every moment of every day.
and I want to underline that today. If any of you are suffering and struggling because you have lost someone close to you, know this, that the Father and the Son by the Spirit can make their home in you and they will embrace you with their love and comfort you as we trust in him.
And so we can go with a new purpose. Like Mary we can tell the good news that Jesus is risen. He's alive and he can radically change your life.
You see our hope is not in the stuff of fantasy. What we're reading here in this gospel account isn't just made up nonsense. Our hope is in the bodily resurrection of Jesus.
[36:05] Almost 2,000 years ago he died on a cross, he was buried and he was raised. And the ones who trust in him will one day hear the voice of the risen Jesus and we will be raised to eternal life in his eternal kingdom forever forever and forever without end.

I hope that each one of us can go joyfully this morning not in despairing loss but filled with hope and say I too have seen the Lord.
Let's pray together. Father God help us if we have any doubts or any concerns or any struggles as to the reliability of the resurrection that you would indeed open our eyes the eyes of our heart that we might see and experience the risen Jesus in our life.
Help us to go with assurance that Jesus is indeed risen and has come to live with all who will trust him now and forever.
Thank you for this account and thank you for Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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