

Resurrection Hope

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 April 2022

Preacher: Nate Taylor

[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, would you please take them back out and open up to the Gospel of John, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

We're going to be in chapter 20, in that section that we just read a minute ago. This morning, what we're looking at is the first encounter of Jesus, with Jesus, post-resurrection.

Now, I don't know about you and your experience in church, but it feels like we can talk about the cross an awful lot, as we should.

The New Testament talks about the cross an awful lot, and so should we. It's so meaningful. And again, I don't know about you, but I feel like kind of in my life, when I come to the resurrection and the empty tomb, it feels like maybe there's less of an emphasis, or maybe just a different sort of emphasis.

I was thinking about that this week. You know, atheist historians, whether they're believers or not, there's no dispute that there was this guy named Jesus in first century Palestine, and people believed that he was the Messiah, and he went to the cross and was crucified.

[1 : 12] There are some outlying historians who might dispute that, but they are barely any. And people who don't believe a lick of the Bible as God's truth believe, the vast, vast, vast majority believe that Jesus, there was a guy named Jesus, and he died on a cross.

Right? It isn't a matter of conflict. But when it comes to what the cross means, there's a wide array of opinions about that.

Why? Why? Well, for one, see, Christians, we believe that Jesus literally, physically, bodily rose from the dead. And because it matters so much that the resurrection happened, I think a lot of times we come to Easter, and maybe that can be our main focus, that it literally happened.

It's a reality in history. And it's a good thing to focus on that. And Paul says himself, if this isn't true, if this is all a hoax, we are to be pitied above anybody else.

Right? And so it's good to engage with apologetic answers about the resurrection, how we can trust the eyewitnesses of what the Bible says. For instance, I'm going to give you one here at the beginning. In our passage, the first witness to the risen Jesus is this lady named Mary Magdalene.

[2 : 31] What you need to know about Mary Magdalene is a couple things. One is that she's a woman, and second is that she's got a kind of sketchy past. Jesus is like cast demons out of her back in Luke 8.

And something else that you need to know is that in that day and age in the Roman Empire, a woman's testimony was not allowed in a court of law as valid testimony.

I am not saying that's a good thing. I'm just telling you that was the reality in the first century Roman Empire. And I doubt that many of you, as you were reading this passage, were thinking to yourself, can you really trust Mary, though?

She's a woman. I hope you weren't thinking that. If you were, we need to have a very long, pointed conversation after this. But that's exactly what people in the Roman Empire during that time would have thought when they heard this.

That would have been a major thing to cause them doubt. There was this guy named Celsus. He was a Greek philosopher in the second century. And he says exactly this.

[3 : 36] He says, Christianity can't be true because the resurrection is based on eyewitness accounts of women. And we all know that women are hysterical. Many of you want to, like, time travel now and go back and give Celsus a piece of your mind, right?

Good. But guess what? His arguments actually would have tracked with a lot of people in the culture at that time. So, if you were going to make up a story about a resurrected Messiah, you know who the last person that you would make your first eyewitness to the resurrection?

A woman with a troubled past. I mean, John says himself a few verses later, Jesus said and did many other things, but he selected these things purposefully so that we might believe.

He could have left this out. Any of the gospel writers could have left it out. They could have just gone to the next guy. Why did they put it in? Because it happened. There's no other reason. Or they're just a bunch of buffoons who can't think.

And if you read the rest of Scripture, at least I would hope that you would see some coherency to it and not think that they're just lunatics. Why not neglect to select Mary Magdalene and move it just around?

[4 : 44] Because it's true. It happened. All four gospels attest to this. And so everybody agrees. Jesus died on the cross, but with the empty tomb. Here's the thing. If it's true, there's a big so.

Christ who died lives again. So what? That is what I want to talk about this morning. If Christ is risen, so what? What does the resurrection mean?

Before we dive into the text, would you pray with me for the preaching of God's Word? Father, we ask that you would give us a vision and taste of resurrection life.

Would you give us a true deep hope that would fill us, that would thrill us, that would break us, that would strengthen us, that would enlighten our minds and grip our hearts?

We pray this in the name of your resurrected Son, Jesus. Amen. J.R.R.R. Tolkien was this guy who wrote Lord of the Rings, book before movie.

[5 : 48] Just a little free advice there, book before movie. And J.R.R.R. Tolkien, he actually coined a term. When you know you're a great writer like Shakespeare, you just make up your own terms. And he coined this term to refer to a turning point in a story.

And the word that he used was this one. He used this word, eucatastrophe. We all know the word catastrophe, right? Like things have gone off the rails. It's a mess.

E-U is the Greek prefix meaning good. And so what he's talking about, he's saying this is the good catastrophe. And the way he defined it, he said the eucatastrophe is this cataclysm of good news and hope and joy spoken into a situation of misery and despair.

Okay? And so in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, this is where Samwise Gamgee, he wakes up after he's thrown the ring into the fiery mountain. And he sees Gandalf, who he thought had died.

And he looks at him and he asks him, he said, is everything that is sad coming untrue? This is the eucatastrophe. Writing about the resurrection, Tolkien actually calls it the eucatastrophe of the Bible.

[6 : 58] The resurrection is a word of hope at the very lowest point of despair. It's this hope that everything that is sad will actually come untrue.

As we meet Mary Magdalene in verse 11, though, just imagine yourself in that passage in her shoes. The eucatastrophe seems miles and miles away.

You don't know if it's ever going to come. Jesus, he's just been crucified. He's died a shameful death of a troublemaker. And there hasn't been time for a bunch of theological reflection on the cross.

It's just confusion and shattered hope. And so it's Sunday morning. And before the first gleam of sunlight breaks through the darkness, Mary goes to the tomb.

She wants to tend to Jesus' body and she wants to mourn his death. But to her shock, what does she find? The stone is rolled away.

[7 : 58] And so she runs back and she tells Peter and John and they run to look at the empty tomb and they leave and they're baffled. And she's not discouraged and dejected.

She stays at the tomb and she is weeping. The Greek word there for weeping connotes uncontrollable sobbing. This isn't a stoic tear rolling down her cheek.

This is shoulder-shaking crying, what some people call ugly crying, right? You don't want anybody to see you in this type of crying. Have you ever felt the sting of despair?

Have you ever searched for hope and just like everything feels hollow? This is where the eucatastrophe occurs.

It's at the lowest point when hope feels hollow, when it feels like all hell has broken loose in your life. This is where the resurrection occurs. What does it mean that those who find themselves in despair, when it feels like all hell has broken loose in their lives and in the world, what does it mean that Christ who died lives again?

[9 : 05] Two things, if you're a note taker, two things. It means hope for your grief and it means hope for your life. It means many things, but that's what we're going to focus on this morning. Hope for your grief and hope for your life.

Kids, do you hear that one? If you want to know how the egg thing was done, maybe you can tell me those. Hope for your grief and hope for your life. First off, hope for your grief. So Mary, she's weeping uncontrollably and she stoops to look in the tomb and she knows Jesus' body isn't there, but it's like if you ever lost something, you kind of look in the same place over and over again, kind of hoping beyond hope that maybe you just didn't notice it the first time.

And she looks in again and it's not there and she's crying and she sees two angels. And it's one of the rare occurrences in the Bible that the first words out of the angel's mouth aren't, do not be afraid.

It's other gospel accounts they say that because they say other women were there too. But to Mary, what do they say? Woman, why are you weeping? I don't know. Maybe she's just, she's too heartbroken and sad to even notice that they're angels, to even have time to be afraid in that moment.

And she tells them, they've taken away my Lord. I don't know where they've laid him. And then she turns around and she sees Jesus, except she doesn't recognize that it's Jesus.

[10 : 23] And I don't, I don't know why. It doesn't tell us exactly why. Maybe she's crying so much she can't see through her tears. There are other moments in the gospels where it seems like people, it takes them a moment to realize that it's Jesus, maybe with his resurrected body.

It's like, oh, it is you, but it's slightly different. Or maybe the last time she saw him, his face and his appearance was so disfigured. By the suffering that he went through, that was the last imprinted image on her mind.

Like when you look at the sun by accident and you close your eyes and you can still see that imprint of the light on your eyelids. That's been imprinted there for her. Or maybe she's just not hoping she's ever going to see him again, so it's not even a possibility.

Maybe some other reason, I don't know. But Jesus asks the same question that the angels ask. Woman, why are you weeping? I wonder, none of us are Jesus, thank goodness, but what would your first post-resurrection words be?

I know who I could go visit. Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, all the haters. Hey, check it out.

[11 : 33] Instead, Jesus' first resurrection words are, Woman, why are you weeping? It feels slightly awkward, right?

Like this is why you go into your car or to a room in your house, away from everybody else when you have a cry like this, because you don't want people to interrupt and ask you questions and have to explain why you're crying.

Have you cried uncontrollably? It feels like all hell is breaking loose in your life. You don't want somebody to come and ask you about the tears.

Give me a reason why you're crying uncontrollably. Like imagine you were in a graveyard, near a gravestone and you're weeping and somebody comes up and goes, Why are you crying? Like some context clues here.

You see, the amazing beauty in these first resurrection words of Jesus, though, the first words from a new creation, invading the old creation.

[12 : 38] Why are you weeping? One pastor puts it this way. The first look at the risen Lord we have is not him situating himself in the courts of heaven or vindicating himself in the palaces of this world, but revealing himself in the tears of a woman.

That is where we first find the risen Christ. That is where resurrection takes shape. That's where Easter has its beauty and power. Why is Mary weeping?

Like a bunch of reasons, right? She's lost her friend. Many of us know what that's like. She's confused. You know, in your sadness so many times, you just want an answer.

You want some sort of answer to hold to. Hey, she's not even thinking, Hey, how about resurrection? She's not remembering anything that Jesus had said a little while ago. She's kind of, I just want his body. I just want that answer.

I'm so confused. Could I just have that and hold on to it? She's lonely. She doesn't even have the consolation of Jesus' body next to her. But you see, more than all of that, she is full of grief and despair.

[13:41] Because she actually believed that Jesus was the Messiah. She had encountered him. And he had changed her life in Luke 8.

He had cast demons out of her. And he said, You get to follow me. I desire your presence. And he's gone around forgiving sins. And she's believed that maybe beyond all hope, her sins could be forgiven.

That everything that she's worried about and people have said to her is not the last word. But this one, this rabbi that she follows, maybe he can define who I am. Maybe I'm not the sum of all my past suffering and mistakes.

This is where we found Mary 2,000 years ago. That's where many of us have been. Maybe it's where some of you are this morning. Feeling the sting of loss, the confusion of suffering, the loneliness of life at times, the grief of sin, the despair of our hopes being let down.

Woman, why are you weeping? Jesus asks not because he's oblivious, right? But because his resurrection actually brings an answer to his question to all of our tears.

[14:54] He sees Mary's grief. Do you see that? His first words is, I have seen your grief. This is not pretend. This is not nothing. I have seen your mourning and your crying.

And I've come to do something about it. You're wrong if you think that you have to dress yourself up and pretend like you have it all together for the resurrected Christ to notice you.

The resurrection, the eucatastrophe, it begins at the place of grief and tears. That is where hope enters in. There is hope for your grief because the risen Christ has seen it, that he's noticed it.

That's where hope comes in. Woman, why? I mean, it's a rude question unless he cares and he's come to do something about her tears.

I mean, Jesus loves, if you don't know this, Jesus loves to fix broken things. He loves to find lost things. He loves to name people who feel unnamed.

[16:00] He loves to raise in the midst of death. He doesn't just ask her, woman, why are you weeping? He then says, whom are you seeking?

I would love to ask Miriam. I wonder if she's thought about those words for the rest of her life.

Woman, whom are you seeking? Whom are you seeking? There's a commentator named D.A. Carson and he writes about this question.

He said, Jesus' question is an invitation to widen her horizons and to recognize that grand as her devotion to him was, her estimate of him was far too small.

I ask you, whom are you seeking? What are you seeking? How are you dealing with the grief of life? Because we all feel it at some point in our lives and we all try to deal with it in some way.

Are you trying to medicate the grief of life by spending a little more? By drinking a little more? By eating a little bit more? By laughing a little bit more?

[17:02] Indulging in pleasure a little bit more? By yelling a little bit louder? Whom or what are you seeking? Maybe like Bono says, you still haven't found what you're looking for.

But the good news of resurrection is that resurrection hope, it comes, it seeks, and it finds us. I just think, this is absolutely amazing. Did you notice what wakes Mary up?

And notice that it's Jesus, her Lord. What wakes her up out of her tears? He says her name. Mary.

I mean, you can probably only imagine all the things she's been called in life. The crazy one, the burden, the fool, the inconvenience, the one to avoid at all costs.

Maybe even more, I wonder what she's called herself in life. I wonder what names you call yourself. What names that people have called you that have stuck. Because you see, sometimes we want a name so badly that we'll even take things like the goofy one and put it to us because we just want to have an identity.

[18:20] But Jesus, Jesus sees her grief and Jesus knows her name. He knows who she is. He knows that her tears will be dried and her salvation will be vindicated.

about ten chapters earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus says that he's the good shepherd and so are his sheep. And he says this about the good shepherd.

The good shepherd knows his sheep and he calls them by name. And his sheep know his voice. And Mary, who's the one that he's pursued, hears her name and realizes that it's the good shepherd.

So many of us search vainly for a name. Have you let Jesus name you? Have you heard him calling you by name? Are you hearing him call your name right now to bring your grief to him and to believe in his resurrection?

[19 : 28] There is hope in your grief. You are not alone in it. You're not abandoned to it. The risen Christ calls people by name. He speaks your name when you are confused and you are grieving like Mary.

That's the first thing. Resurrection means hope for our grief. He enters in. He's not a distant Savior. He is one who comes and is present with us in our grief and our confusion and our suffering. But do you know it is better than having somebody present with you in the midst of your grief? Having somebody who can do something about your grief. Who can change it. That's the second thing. Resurrection means hope for your life.

And you see it on the cross and in Mary's tears we have this question does God even care? And we get the answer once and for all that can echo into eternity.

Yes, God cares. but also in the resurrection we have the answer not only to whether he cares but if he actually has something to do and say about it.

[20 : 32] When Mary hears her name it's like she's invited into a new world of hope. A world where she can ask is everything that is sad coming untrue?

See it's precisely at the moment when Mary is weeping and she feels like in her life that all hell has broken loose.

That in fact what has come is that all heaven has broken loose. That the world of heaven is invading this broken sinful world.

It's all a new creation story guys. This is what's going on in the Gospel of John. John has been telling do a little theology with us for a second. John has been telling a creation story. How does he start his Gospel?

1-1 In the beginning was the Word. It echoes it's supposed to call to mind immediately the very first page of the Bible the very first words of the Bible. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

[21 : 29] You see similar to that to the creation story John is saying listen this is a recreation story. This is a new creation story. And there's these things as you go through the Gospel of John called signs and he points them out.

This is the first sign that Jesus did. And he does seven signs. It starts with turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana and it ends with him raising Lazarus.

Seven signs just like there's seven days in the first week of creation. But we're not supposed to stop counting there. There's an eighth sign.

There's resurrection. It's the start of a new week. It reorders life. The resurrection is a new beginning a new hope for your life. And see so again think about Genesis and think about John. In Genesis 1 what does God do? He creates the world and on the sixth day he breathes life into man. He says it's good.

[22 : 32] It's finished. And he rests on the seventh day. On the sixth day the second Adam the true man the image of the invisible God goes to the cross and for all of his work he says he breathes out his last and what does he say?

It is finished. All the work of redemption I have accomplished. I've come to do the Father's will and I've done it all. And he goes and he rests in the tomb on the seventh day.

John points this out. He points this out that Jesus goes and he's resting in the tomb on the seventh day and if we had read earlier in verse 1 and verse 19 he makes explicit that it's the first day of the week.

He could have said three days later here we are. No but he says it's the first day of the week. And what does Mary turn around and mistake Jesus for? A gardener. It's the best mistake.

Because it's like the first gardener Adam standing in the midst of the garden. Here comes the second Adam the true gardener. He is the ultimate image bearer of God and he has come to uproot the thorns and the thistles of the first gardener.

[23 : 53] And this idea that new creation is entering into the old creation. resurrection is the tip of the spear of God's world and his life invading this world.

So, what does that mean? You're like, thanks for the theology lesson, right? We can't just stop at the resurrection as some nice little tiny bow to tie on a sad story of the cross. Oh, isn't that nice? Resurrection. Oh, clap. Let's go home. I feel like a warm hug. No. after God creates people, what does he do? He tasks them with something.

He gives them purpose in God's resurrection, in Jesus' resurrection, in this new creation story. Are we supposed to sit around and go, oh, no more tears.

Isn't that nice? I'm going to now go do whatever I want to do. No. He tasks Mary, go and tell. He gives her a vocation.

[24 : 53] A job. A purpose. A dignity. A part to play in his new creation. And we too are tasked with being go and tell people.

Just like Mary, we're tasked with being people of prayer who pray like we did earlier, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That prayer is praying, Lord, would all heaven break loose in this world of sin and death.

Hope for your life. It doesn't mean cross your fingers. Oh, I hope. Wish upon a star. Everything might be sorted out in the end. It's the conviction that God will do what he promised because the new creation has already broken into the world in Jesus' resurrection.

And because of the resurrection, the world is really a different place and we're called to be witnesses to it and live in light of it. And as we do, we are going to be changed.

And this vocation of being witnesses to the resurrection, guess what? It changes everything. It's not just saying, hey, well, everybody needs to be like a full-time missionary and go into a full-time vocational ministry in the church.

[26 : 03] If God's calling you to do that, great. It's not just about evangelism, though it should apply to that. You see, what is going on is if you are a new creation in all that you do, just as the first Adam was tasked as an image-bearer of God to reflect the goodness and love and justice and mercy and kindness of God into the world, that is what you are called to do, too.

He has given you a purpose. If you are his, you have a task. You have a part. You have a role. Act in light of it. The resurrection doesn't mean sit around and think nice, warm, fuzzy thoughts.

The resurrection means get up and go. Be a witness. It means hope for your life. Hope for your life into eternity. Yes and amen. Hope for your life even starting now.

If there's resurrection, hope for your life. You can take risks. I'm not a big money investor person, but what I understand about it is you risk investing your money and you risk losing it in order to make more money.

Isn't that basically how it works? If Christ is risen, shouldn't we be able to take risks in relationships, saying a hard thing to somebody, believing that there's actually profit from it and that if Christ has secured our life, that we can risk scorn, we can risk rejection, we can risk heartache, we can risk our lives because Christ, who died, lives again.

[27 : 29] And for those united to the risen Messiah by faith, everything sad will come untrue. Do you believe this? If not, may it be so bold as to say, how big do you think your hope is?

What is your hope? Whom are you seeking? If he's done that, don't you think things should get shaken up?

If Christ is risen, doesn't it change something? Shouldn't it reorder our lives? Like it reordered worship on what day of the week? Shouldn't there be a new beginning?

Maybe Easter isn't for bunnies and chocolate. Maybe Easter is for scared, trembling, insecure, confused, shattered people who believe in the midst of this world of death that life has come.

So Jesus wants to invite you into him. He doesn't just want to enter into your grief, he wants to invite you into his very life and give you hope for your life now and forever more. And you know what the promise is in Revelation 21?

[28 : 45] That he himself will wipe away every tear. You won't just ask while you're crying. He will wipe every single one away. The resurrection is not this vague rumor but the very life of the future offered to you now.

And we're about to sing in a couple minutes. You can know no guilt in life, no fear in death. Do you struggle with guilt? Do you struggle with fear? You can know no guilt in life and no fear in death.

You can have sin's curse lose its grip on you. I wonder if you ever thought about that. How much hope you have in Christ. I wonder if you ever thought about then how much Jesus loves you.

How big his love is. Close with this. There's a book called Guess How Much I Love You. I think they turned it into a cartoon. Does anybody know Guess How Much I Love You?

Do you read that here? Yeah, I didn't think it was. I don't think it's from America. I think it's from the UK. Guess How Much I Love You. It's about little nut brown hair and big nut brown hair. Little nut brown hair is a tiny little bunny rabbit and his dad big nut brown hair is the big bunny rabbit and in

this book *Guess How Much I Love You*.

[29 : 58] Little nut brown hair keeps saying guess how much I love you dad and he says something as big as he can possibly think. He says, yeah, I love you this big and his dad says, oh yeah, well I love you this big and he stretches his arms even more and little nut brown hair says, I love you as high as I can jump and big nut brown hair says, I love you as high as I can jump and he jumps even higher and at first you're like, it sounds like one upmanship, what's going on?

But you read along and you go with it and he says, guess how much I love you as far as that river and big nut brown hair says, I love you as far as that river and beyond. And little nut brown hair says, I love you to the moon and big nut brown hair says, I love you to the moon and back. Loves me to the moon and back. We say that, things like that to our kids, like how much do I love you and they try to come up, you know, I love you infinity, whatever that means, right? You're like, I love you infinity plus one and we do that back and forth.

I love you to the moon and back and I do, I love my kids so much. I can do anything for them. But you know what it's impossible for me to say to them? I love you to the cross and back.

I love you to the grave and back. I love you to heaven and back. These are the words of the resurrected Christ to people who grieve, people who long for meaning in their life, that he's loved you to the grave and back.

[31 : 30] There is so much hope in that. Thanks be to God. Let's pray. Father, our only hope in life and in death is that we are not our own, but that we've been bought with a price and that we belong to Christ.

That we've been crucified with Christ and it is no longer us who live, but Christ who lives in us. And if we've been crucified, and buried with him, then we have been raised with him too.

That your resurrection, Jesus, has secured our life for eternity. That it's the down payment, that it's the first fruits of our own bodily resurrection. Would you help us to be an Easter people?

A people who believe in the good news of the cross and the empty tomb. And that you are a God who reigns right now, Jesus, that you have ascended, that you sit at the right hand of the Father, that you intercede on behalf of sinful people, that you've sent the Spirit into our lives to bring resurrection life to us here in Glasgow.

We pray, Lord, that we would be witnesses to this. That we too would enter in and weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. We pray that we would bear witness to this life, that there would be something that looks different about how we live because we believe that Christ who died lives again.

[33 : 02] We pray all this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.