

# Gospel Light on a Dark Morning

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Preacher: Mr Calum Campbell

[ 0 : 0 0 ] A reading this afternoon is found in the Gospel of John. John's Gospel.

And we are reading in chapter 20 of the Gospel of John. From the beginning of that chapter, that well-known chapter, which speaks of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are reading John chapter 20 from verse 1 down to the end of verse 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. 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.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] And stooping to look in, he saw the linen clothes lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen clothes lying there, and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen clothes, but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.

And as she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet, they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping?

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

[ 2 : 5 0 ] Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him, In Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher.

Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, for I have not ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God, and your God.

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

Amen, and may the Lord bless to us that portion from his own holy word. We will sing once again, this time we are singing in Psalm 16.

[ 3 : 59 ] Psalm 16. We will sing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 16, from verse 7 down to the end of the Psalm at verse 11.

Psalm 16 at verse 7. I bless the Lord because he doth by counsel me conduct, and in the seasons of the night my reins do me instruct, down to the end of verse marked 11.

Thou wilt me show the path of life of joys there is full store, before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures evermore. Shall we sing these words together?

I will bless the Lord because he doth by counsel me conduct. I bless the Lord because he doth by counsel me conduct.

And in the seasons of the night my reins do me inspire.

[ 5 : 18 ] Before me still the Lord I dare send it in soul of thee.

But where I stand that night my reins do me. I shall walk to their view.

Because of this my heart is now, and joy shall be expressed.

If I, my glory, I might bless, then come and bless our rest.

Because my soul and faith to dwell, shall not be left by the King.

[ 6 : 46 ] Not if thou did thy holy one, God has shown to see.

That wilt be shown the crown of thy earth.

Of thy stead is for sore. Before thy years are thy divine power.

But that your self alone. Let us for a time turn once again to that portion of scripture that we read together.

In the Gospel of John at chapter 20. And we shall read once again at the beginning of this chapter.

[ 8 : 10 ] John chapter 20 at verse 1.

This is Easter Sunday. And this is the day that many, many churches throughout the world will be seeking to bring to our attention the wonderful news of the risen Christ.

Which brings joy into our hearts. But the joy that we have with regard to the risen Christ. Should not prevent us from hearing about the resurrection of Christ throughout any Sabbath of the year.

It isn't just at Easter weekend that we should be reflecting on the fact that our Lord and Savior rose from the dead.

And it isn't just in the month of December that our Savior came into this world and was born.

[ 9 : 44 ] But we should be remembering that every day of our lives. And that he came and that he died and that he rose again. And with that in mind, I want to seek to speak for a little while about the greatest discovery this world has ever known.

And as wonderful as the discovery is, at the beginning of the Gospels where we read of our Lord and Savior being born in this world. To me, it is even more wonderful when we read of the awful way in which he was put to death.

And yet, he rose from the grave. And then he met with his own disciples, the very ones that deserted him and fled.

In order to become the people who would present and distribute the Gospel of the early Church. So we want to look at this morning, the first nine verses of this glorious chapter.

Under two simple headings. We will look at Mary Magdalene's discovery at the sepulcher. We find that in verses 1 and 2.

- [ 11 : 09 ] And then secondly, we will look at John and Peter's discovery at the sepulcher. There is way too much in this chapter to put into one sermon.
- There is way too much information here for us with the life of Mary Magdalene alone. With her meetings with the disciples. And her meetings with Christ.
- And her meeting with the angels to put together in one sermon. So let us look at the first nine verses then. With regard to this, the greatest discovery that this world has ever known.
- And it is remarkable when we read the first two verses of this chapter. That this discovery is made known to one woman and two men.
- One woman who loved the Lord in a most unique way. One woman, Mary Magdalene. Who knew what it was to truly know what it was to be forgiven of much.
- [ 12 : 24 ] And she never ever forgot that. Where Christ went, she went. She was one of the Lord's followers. And along with her, we find in the opening verses of John.
- These two men who would go on to write a large part of the New Testament. In Peter and in John. Peter who would go on to write his own letters.
- John who would go on to write his own letters. And the book of Revelation and this account of scripture that we have here. These two men who would in many ways go on to become great apostles of the early church.
- So here we have then before us, let us look at our first heading. Mary Magdalene's discovery at the sepulcher. And we read in verse one.
- Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark. And she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
- [ 13 : 38 ] Now I know that you have heard numerous sermons in the past with regard to the resurrection. And my hope and prayer is that there will be something here to encourage us as Christians.
- And something here to challenge us. If we have not yet placed our trust in the Lord. But if you can, picture the scene.
- It's early Sunday morning. And if you can picture it in your mind. Picture that it is still dark as scripture is telling us here.
- When some women, a small band of sisters in Christ, leave their homes under the cover and under the shelter of darkness.
- In order to bring spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus Christ who has been laid to rest in this sepulcher.
- [ 14 : 41 ] Now we have read the first 19 verses of this chapter. And there is no word in these 19 verses of women being present. There is only mention of a woman.
- Mary Magdalene. And it is vitally important for us whenever we turn to any part of any of the gospels.
- To seek to find out as much information from the other three gospels as to what is actually taking place. Let me show you what I am trying to say to you. John only mentions Mary Magdalene.
- But I am saying to you that there was a group of women. So we are asking the question at the start of the service today. Who are these women? Well let's go to Matthew.
- First of all. And in Matthew 28 and in verse 1. We read this. Now after the Sabbath towards the dawn of the first day of the week.
- [ 15 : 45 ] Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. So we are told in Matthew that there is another Mary.

And so we ask the question. Well who is this Mary? Let us jump now into what Mark tells us. And in Mark's account in chapter 16 and verse 1.

We read when the Sabbath was passed. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James. And Salome brought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

And anoint him. Do you see what is happening here? Mark gives more information and more light. We are told that the Mary of Matthew is actually Mary the mother of James.

And we are told not just is this Mary the mother of James present. But we are also told that Salome is present. Let us move forward then and see what Luke tells us.

[ 16 : 46 ] And when we go into Luke's account of this early morning. We read in chapter 24 in verse 1. But on the first day of the week at early dawn.

They went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna. And Mary the mother of James.

And other women who were with them. I told the apostles. Do you see what is happening? More information being given here. Dr Luke doesn't mention to us about Salome being present.

But he mentions another woman, Joanna. And not just that. But he goes on to say, and the other woman. So you see we don't actually know how many people there was in this small band of sisters in Christ.

Who set off that early morning. Maybe there was half a dozen. Maybe there was a dozen. Some are named. Some are not named.

[ 17 : 51 ] But they are present. But John's account of the resurrection. He doesn't give any information about these other women. Like the other gospel writers.

His only concern is about Mary Magdalene. And especially what she saw. The nearest we get to John.

Mentioning other women present with Mary Magdalene. Is in verse 2. When Mary Magdalene leaves the sepulcher. And goes running to Peter and John.

And she says to them in verse 2. They have taken the Lord out of the tomb. And we do not know where they have laid him. We being the plural.

It is not recorded in John's gospel. I do not know. But we do not know. And these things are really interesting.

[ 18 : 52 ] And we ask why is he so focused on Mary Magdalene. The beloved disciple. And we'll come to that. But in verse 1 you see.

In the life of Mary Magdalene. What you have here. Is the proof. Of one. Who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. With all of her heart.

The proof of her love. Is evident. In John chapter 20. She is amongst. The last. To leave. Calvary.

Where Jesus has been crucified. And she is amongst the first. That Sabbath morning. Who seek to anoint. The body.

Of Jesus Christ. Her love for Christ. Is stronger. Than any fear of the night. Her love for Christ. Is stronger. Than meeting any Roman soldiers.

[ 19 : 51 ] On their journey. On their journey. Her love for the Lord. Puts me to shame. This morning. As I stand in this pulpit.

And isn't it wonderful to think. Of this woman. Who had had so much forgiven. In her life. That she. Was the one who followed Christ.

To the last. In his humiliation. Exaltation. And here. Mary Magdalene. Is the first. To meet. Christ. In his exaltation.

When he has risen. From the grave. And here she comes. To the grave side.

Here she comes. With this band of sisters. Who love the Lord. To anoint. The body of Christ. This was to be. Their last. Act of love.

[ 20 : 49 ] In remembrance. Of their Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ. Now. As we think.

Along these lines. We must. Understand. That when we read. That it was still dark. When these women set off.

The timeline. As we know it. Would be. Between the hours. Of three o'clock. In the morning. And six o'clock. Being dawn.

That is the hour. Of the night. That is the hour. Of the day. When they leave their homes. To make this journey. And you can imagine.

Them as they travel. By night. And you can almost picture them. Saying to one another. How is it. That we are actually.

[ 21 : 47 ] Going to anoint. The body. Of Christ. And I can picture. These women. Travelling. And walking. And praying.

That in some way. That the Lord. In his mercy. Would move the hearts. Of the Roman soldiers. That would have been. That would have been. Guarding.

The sepulcher. So that they would. Move the stone. To allow them access in. To anoint. The body. Of Christ. But as they travel. During the night.

And as they travel. In these dark hours. Little do they realize. And little do they comprehend. That the Lord. Is already at work.

And as their fears would be. Would they even be allowed. To grant access. To anoint. The body of Christ. The Lord. Has already worked. In Matthew 28.

[ 22 : 42 ] At verse 2. Where we read. And behold. There was a great earthquake. And the angel of the Lord. Descended from heaven. And came. And rolled back the stone.

And sat upon it. So they didn't have to worry. About moving the stone. Now I find this fascinating.

And I share this story with you just now. Not to make you laugh. In any way. But I found myself. Recently. Before the clocks changed. Having to get up.

Between these hours. Of three o'clock. And six o'clock. During the night. Because I needed. To go to the bathroom. And I thought.

It would be better. Not to put on the light. And disturb. Perhaps wake my wife. Life. So I did that small journey. From the foot of the bed.

[ 23 : 44 ] To the bedroom door. Down the hallway. A wee bit. And into the bathroom. And I did it. Within these hours. In the darkness.

And in the process. Of doing that. I managed to trap. My little pinky toe. Underneath the door. While trying to close it.

So much so. That it cut my toe. And bruised it. And I was in agony. For days afterwards. The reason. I'm telling you this.

Is because. How many times. Have you read. The opening verses. Of John chapter 20. And have you stopped. To think. About how the Lord.

Protected these women. As they traveled. Under cover of darkness. In their journey. From their homes. To where the sepulcher was.

[ 24 : 39 ] How easy it would be. To get a bruise. To get a cut. How easy it would have been. To break a bone. To break. To get a sprain.

But no. In the time. Of little daylight. Do you see. How the Lord. Is protecting these women. In their journey. As they make their way.

To. The sepulcher. To anoint. The body. Of Christ. And you see. Nowhere. In scripture. Nowhere.

In scripture. Do you read. Nowhere. In the old testament. Has it been prophesied. And nowhere. In any of the gospels. Has Jesus Christ. Ever said. To his disciples.

Or to his followers. That the stone. Had to be rolled away. In order. For him. To rise. To the stone. To the stone. The seven sayings. On the cross.

[ 25 : 35 ] Are a wonderful study. And you see. So much. Of what has been. Prophesied. Over the years. In these seven sayings. But this was not. Prophesied. The resurrection.

Body. Of Christ. Was such. That he was. Able. To leave. That tomb. Supposing. The stone. Had never been.

Moved. Moved. Away. At all. And we see. That in verses. 19. And we see. That in verses. 26. When Christ.

Appears. In. John. Chapter. 20. To his disciples. On two occasions. We read. In verse. 19. On the evening.

Of the first day. Of the week. The doors. Being locked. And the disciples. Were in fear. Wasn't there. That day. But then. We read. In verse.

[ 26 : 31 ] 26. Don't we. The day. Days. Later. Jesus. Comes. And. The doors. Were locked. In verse.

Jesus. Came. And stood. Among them. Christ. Did not. Need. The stone. To be. Rolled. Yet.

The stone. Has been. Rolled. Away. For. Many. Reasons. But. At least. Two. Specific.

Reasons. First. One. Being. That. The grave. Has. Been. Conquered. And. That.

Victory. Has. And. Also. The. That. In. The fullness. Of. Time. Peter.

[ 27 : 26 ] And. John. And. Eventually. Mary. Magdalene. Would. Go. Into. The. The.

The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The.

The. The. The. physicists. From. From. The. Still.

It. There. The. Verse. These. Writhe down. The. Before. each.

Them. To be hom chords. been rolled away, you would think that that would bring joy into their hearts. You would think that that would somehow or other remind them of what Christ had said to them time after time after time that he was going to rise from the dead. But not for Mary Magdalene, not for these heartbroken women. When they see that that stone has been rolled away, it only makes their heartbreaking situation even worse. They have no concept of the resurrection. They have no concept of the resurrection faith. But instead, we find that Mary Magdalene will come to another conclusion.

[ 29 : 06 ] Her life with regard to her Saviour, her devotion is something that is not based on hope at this time. It is based on the memory of her love for Christ. And it is based on what Christ has done for her. But she has no hope in the risen Christ at this moment in time. But you know what's amazing?

When you read these things and you think to yourself, ah Mary, how on earth could you get it so wrong? But what's amazing about John chapter 20 is that it's not going to be very long before the Lord Jesus Christ will greatly reward her, even though she is so confused with regard to what is actually taking place.

Here is a woman and she is distraught. And her initial reaction to what she sees, she does not go to the sepulcher.

She does not stoop in. She makes a decision from a distance. And her reaction is panic. And the panic causes her to do what she does in verse 2. She runs.

She runs faster, I am sure, than she has ever run before into the city, into the place where she knows Peter and John are to be found. And she runs there to the place where she knows she will see them.

[ 31 : 02 ] To bring unto them the announcement of what she has seen. Ah, can you picture, can you picture her breathless announcement to Peter and to John?

Can you picture her being out of breath and bringing this news that the stone has been rolled away and the body of Christ has been taken and that they don't know where his body is?

You know, we can be critical of Mary Magdalene. And we can say, oh Mary, how can you get it so wrong?

But let's defend her as best as we can. After all, it was still dark. After all, she runs alone to the disciples.

After all, she is just like every other follower of Jesus. None of them, not one, expecting Christ to rise from the dead.

[ 32 : 18 ] Not even his beloved disciples, who had all forsaken him and fled. And she would have come. And she would have come that morning with her understanding of what had taken place.

And her understanding was this. That the body of Jesus had been stolen. Because the stone had been rolled away. Grave robbery, of course, was not an uncommon crime these days.

And this is what she announces to them. And can you picture her? Can you picture her breathlessness as she announces this news to them? Can you picture her passionate mourning?

With regard to how she feels about the missing Christ. She is there.

She has been there to see the horror of it all at Calvary. She has witnessed that. And now all she wants to do is to go quietly and anoint his body.

[ 33 : 34 ] And despite the fact she hasn't looked into the sepulcher, she is convinced that the body has been stolen. And she is distraught that her last act of tender care and love and kindness cannot be administered to the Lord.

Because the Lord is not the present here. And you know, I think of Mary Magdalene just now and I'm thinking to myself.

She must have been thinking things like, what on earth are they doing to the body of the Lord now?

Have they not done enough? I don't know if I shared this with you the last time I was here.

But it was round about a year ago just now. And I had got up early in the morning on a Sunday. And I watched my next door neighbour coming up the croft, carrying what resembled a dead lamb.

[ 34 : 54 ] If I said this the last time, forgive me. And he was walking up the croft, carrying the lamb that was dead. And carrying it by the two feet.

The lamb did not look like a lamb that day. There was not a spot of white wool on that lamb.

The fowls of the air had attacked it. And it had been dead for some time. And it didn't resemble a lamb. And when Mary Magdalene left the cross of Christ that day, Jesus Christ did not resemble a human being.

His flesh had been torn apart. There wasn't one part of his body that wasn't covered in blood. As he hung there, making a provision for you and I.

And now this woman, with her last image of Christ, and she is convinced that the body of Christ has been stolen, and she is thinking, have they not done enough to him?

[ 36 : 17 ] What else can they do to the body of Christ? This morning, I got up at half past five to check on the sheep.

And I witnessed the other extreme. I witnessed two young lambs being born into this world. And these lambs that had just been born, you could see the mother of the sheep protecting the lambs and leaking them clean.

And within a short space of time, they were pure white. And it reminded me, that's what our Lord does for us as believers.

He protects us in this world. And he looks after us in this world. And the day will come, as Jude tells us, where we will be presented in the presence of his glory, blameless.

We will be presented blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. Or as the authorised version says, in much better way, faultless.

[ 37 : 41 ] Faultless. Isn't it remarkable that the one whose body was destroyed at Calvary, who did not resemble even a human being, is going to present us one day faultless and pure before the Father if we believe on the risen Christ.

And she's still calling him the Lord at this time. And this would suggest when she meets them and when she says to Peter and John, they have, we know not where they have laid him.

And they have taken the Lord out of the tomb. Again, you have the plural there. So all the women are in unison of the same thing, despite the fact they have not gone to the grave and looked into the sepulcher.

You know, there's a huge contrast between verse 2 with what Mary says to Peter and John and to what Mary says to the angels in verse 13.

When she says to the angels, when she doesn't recognise the angels, where in verse 10 we read that Peter and John had gone back home and when all the other women had gone back to their homes, Mary remains at the sepulcher, weeping, mourning, looking for answers, looking for hope that somewhere somebody will tell her news of where the body of Christ is.

[ 39 : 22 ] And she says to the angels there, I know not where they have taken him. But isn't her report to Mary, from Mary to Peter and John, remarkable?

Isn't it remarkable that we read that John, the beloved disciple, seems to be alone with Simon Peter at this time?

Have you ever thought about it? The last time we read of Peter, he has just denied the Lord for the third time with oaths and curses, even in the presence of a young child.

And here now, this Peter who had fled, they had all fled when Christ was arrested. none of them but the beloved disciple John were present at the crucifixion.

But John is with Simon Peter here. And you know, to me, that's telling me that this is the one whom Jesus called the beloved disciple.

[ 40 : 43 ] This was the most tender-hearted of all the disciples. And here he is, and you can be sure of this, that he would be helping Simon Peter at this time with his grief and with his pain and with his sorrow of having denied Christ.

Who better for Simon Peter to be spending time with than the beloved disciple John at this time? And you know, there's a lesson in that for you and I, my friends, when we see that somebody that we knew and loved and worshipped with at one point has backslidden.



We are instructed by the Lord to seek, if we can, to go and comfort them and spend time with them in order that they will come back into the fold as penitent backsliders.

So let's look then for a while now at our second heading. Our second heading which we find, John and Peter's discovery at the sepulcher, which we see in verses 3 to 9.

And we read in verse 4 that both of them ran. And I am convinced that like Mary Magdalene, these two men would have run faster than they have ever run before.

[ 42 : 15 ] It would appear that these two men, the minute that they meet Mary Magdalene, that they believe her report and they run straight to the sepulcher.

And scripture tells us that John outran Peter. But it's remarkable, isn't it?

It's as if despite the fact they know that Christ is dead, despite the fact that they don't believe that Christ has risen, yet they still have a zeal towards Christ as they run to the place where Christ was laid to rest.

Can you have you ever stopped to think about what they were thinking about as they ran together that day? What was going through their minds? Most commentators are of the opinion that John outran Peter because he was younger.

But I think there was more to it than that. I think for Peter the nearer that he came to the sepulcher, the more he was reminded of what he had done in denying Christ.

[ 43 : 39 ] The nearer he came to the sepulcher, the more sorrow and shame consumed him in such a way that it was like a weight upon him as he ran.

And maybe you're in here today and you're feeling a little bit like that. And maybe it was such an effort to come here today.

Maybe you're sitting here today thinking if everybody knew how sinful my heart was, if anybody in here knew all the things that I had done this week and thought about this week, they wouldn't want to be worshipping with me today.

There is no doubt about it my friends, but that a sense of guilt and a sense of shame can affect us both physically and mentally.

And that I believe is why John was with Simon Peter at this moment in time. And I wonder as well as they ran, they had seen the trap as it were that had been set out in order to capture Christ and to arrest Christ and they had witnessed all the falseness and all the horrendous things that took place in the court case in order to put Christ to death.

[ 45 : 09 ] And I wonder as they ran did they think that they too were next? I wonder as they ran did they think they were running into a trap because after all in this chapter and in verse 19 when Christ appears to them we see them meeting in secret with the door closed, with the door locked, with fear of the Jews in case they were next.

John has no resurrection thoughts of Christ when he reaches the sepulcher that day. but he does something that Mary Magdalene doesn't do.

He stoops down and he looks in and as he does so he sees a little bit of what is actually taking place.

Verse 5 and stooping in to look in he saw the linen clothes lying but he did not go in. He saw part of what Christ had left there as a sign for them.

But it's as if he's constrained from going in. He stoops down, he bends down but he doesn't physically go into the sepulcher. What does he see?

[ 46 : 27 ] He sees the linen clothes lying. He sees the signs from Christ that Christ is in control. He sees even that the clothes are neatly folded.

But still he is not reminded of the fact that time and time again Christ has told him that he must die and rise from the dead.

But what he does realise in that moment as he stoops and as he looks he realises that Mary Magdalene has got it wrong.

Because whatever has happened in the sepulcher that morning it has not been robbery that has taken place. Christ's body has not been stolen.

Because of the way in which the grave clothes and the linen clothes were lying, he reaches that conclusion. But then you see in the following verse something which I think is fantastic.

[ 47 : 30 ] Although John could outrun Peter, Peter, our dear Peter, he's always going to out there John. I wonder did John stop himself from going in and he was thinking to himself maybe I'll wait for Simon Peter to come.

Well we don't know that. But by the time Peter comes it's almost as if he moves John out of the way and straight in there he goes.

Straight in there he goes. Without a moment's hesitation. There's nothing going to stop Peter like there's something stopping John from going in. You know here is a man who is seeking to repent.

But that impulse of nature that he's always had before he denied Christ it's still present. And that's what we love about Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter.

Peter. So he's the first one to go actually into the sepulcher and see there the full glory of all that has been there taking place.

[ 48 : 46 ] He sees the full evidence of what has happened and he sees that the clothes have been arranged by the Lord in such a way that he too knows that the body of Christ has not been stolen.

Romans chapter 6 and in verse 9 sums up exactly what has taken place here.

We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. What we're seeing here is that he arose to die no more.

Lazarus of course when he died he rose from his grave with his grave clothes on but what of our Lord and Saviour we don't know what he had on when he revealed himself to Mary and to the disciples that day because all that he had been bound with with the fine linen was there in the grave was there in the sepulcher laid out in such a way that almost as if the body of Christ was still wrapped in that linen how neatly bound it was as he just ascended from the grave clothes and from the sepulcher.

You know my friends sometimes we make much of our grave clothes and it's always been a very common thing for from all I've ever known is that when many people have died they've been wanted to be buried in their finest suit women with their finest dress with their finest hat many people in a specific uniform them.

[ 51 : 02 ] My uncle who passed away last year in Manchester wanted to be buried despite living all of his life in Manchester most of his life in Manchester wanted to be buried in his guilt and many some man has been buried in his guilt but ultimately what does it matter how we are dressed when we are lowered into the ground if we have not made things right with Christ when we are alive and well in this world.

So here we have the facts and the facts tell us that everything is orderly nothing is out of place grave robbers would never have been present at that moment in time because this was new fine linen that Nicodemus had purchased we are told that in Mark and wrapped around his body and that fine linen would have been taken away by grave robbers seeing as it was new so there is no evidence of foul play and in fact some commentators will go as far as to say that the spices that were anointed in the very folds of the grave clothes of Christ that it would have been impossible to have unwrapped the boundings of the linen without damaging it but there it is in the sepulcher that day in its perfect condition as Christ has risen from the dead and then we see in verse 8 something even more wonderful we read in verse 8 after Simon

Peter has entered in we read that finally then the other disciple who reached the tomb first also went in why do you think he went in have you ever wondered that do you not think that the awe of what Simon Peter was seeing do you not think that Simon Peter would have been beckoning John and saying come in and see this you have got to see this you must see this for your own eyes and what happens here this man who has denied Christ who is so bold in the way that he goes into the sepulcher calls and beckons Peter John to come in and John eventually comes in and then we read in verse 8 that he saw and believed isn't it remarkable the part that Simon

Peter plays in this but what exactly did John see in the tomb that day he saw exactly what Simon Peter saw the two of them are in there together the two of them are seeing the evidence the two of them are there and it's as if they are seeing the very signs that Christ is leaving for them that is why the stone has been rolled away it is for their own edification as proof to them that he is in control and that he has risen from the dead and for John that morning we can say that he believed that Jesus was of course the real Messiah he believed that morning that he was truly the Lord of glory and he believes that Christ has risen from the dead and for

John at this moment in time the dawning of the resurrection of faith is finally starting to take hold of his heart it's as if he's in some way remembering what Christ said and he believes they both saw the same thing and we read here in this chapter that John saw and John believed but what of Simon Peter what does scripture tell us of him well scripture tells us in Luke and in chapter 24 and in verse 12 that Peter rose and ran to the tomb stooping in and looking in he saw the linen clothes by themselves and he went home marveling at what had happened marveling

[ 56 : 25 ] I think that word marveling in the ESV is a very generous word with regard to what Peter is actually doing for those of you who have the authorized version you will read not the word marveling but you will read the words he went home wondering about what has happened wondering they both leave the tomb together and one sees and believes and the other sees and wonders isn't it remarkable it appears at this moment in time that Peter still does not grasp what is actually taking place he still does not grasp the full significance of it and we read in this portion of scripture for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead then the disciples went back to their homes but I can imagine the beloved disciple sharing with Peter on their journey back home of what he thinks now has taken place and the news that he has of the risen

Christ John has reached the resurrection faith without the appearance of Christ but for Simon Peter he was not going to reach the resurrection faith until later that evening where we read in verse 19 when Christ appears to the disciples in the locked room home you know my friends it seems incredible that with all that Christ said with all the evidence that was laid out in the tomb with all that he preached that nobody believed he would rise again from the dead despite many of them being with him for three years none of them expected

Christ to rise from the dead I find that incredible and do you know what else I find incredible I find incredible today that there could be and I hope there's not but I find it incredible that there could be people in here today after hearing sermon after sermon year after year and they have still not fully committed their lives to Christ as we wonder in awe at how the disciples and Mary Magdalene just did not get the message of the cross are we here today in that same situation when we walk out of here in a few minutes time could it be that there are going to be some of us here who have seen and believed and there will be others who will see and wonder you know my friends hell is full of people who heard the gospel and they chose for one reason or another not to commit their lives to

Christ but what if this is our last opportunity what if this is our last sabbath here in this world what if Christ comes tonight before the evening sermon is preached what if you and what of I well there is one thing for sure we are amongst the most blessed people in the world today if our trust is in the God of this scripture and if our trust is in the risen Christ Peter finally got it Mary Magdalene finally got it but what about you do you finally get the message of the gospel well as we part can I just leave you with this thought that the empty tomb and the empty cross are God's reminder to you and I today and every day that the debt of sin has been paid by Jesus

Christ paid in full not by the dead Christ but by the risen Christ who is being exalted in glory right now he has paid it all and how wonderful it is that we have not the comfort of him not just the comfort of him in this world but the full assurance that he will one day present us faultless at the end of our time in this world if we place our trust in him and there are many in here today who have placed their trust in him and we give thanks to the Lord for that but I hope and I pray and I plead that every single one of us in here would put our trust in him and as we are found gathered here this day that in the fullness of time we too will be found gathered in glory having been presented faultless by the risen

[ 63 : 33 ] Christ Amen may the Lord bless to us these thoughts around his own holy word we shall conclude by singing in Psalm 118 Psalm 118 at verse 17 Psalm 118 and we will sing from verse 17 to the end of verse marked 25 I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover the Lord hath made just eyes it sore but not to death given over down down to the end of verse mark 25 this is the day God made and it will joy triumphantly save now I pray thee Lord I pray send now prosperity Psalm 118 verses 17 to 25

I shall not die but live I shall not die but live and shall the marks of all describe the Lord bow me just eyes his sword began but not but not who doesatoon ■ cult sen he open not to thee than his song my house has and where I am like that

Thank you.

He will rise this far than he has, and has my safety.

That stone is taken for the storm, which in the weather's day desires.

[ 66 : 44 ] This is the glory of the Lord, and of the sin that comes.

This is the gift of the Lord, and will join thy love and peace.

Sing thou right with me, Lord, I pray. Send thou prosperity.

Amen. Can I once again give thanks to your minister and your Kirk session for the privilege of allowing me to be with you today.

And your minister has instructed me to go to the door before I leave today. Shall we just pray in conclusion? O Lord, how wonderful a thing it is to read and to sing at the start of a sermon of the plot that there was against the Lord's anointed.

[ 68 : 15 ] How wonderful it is that we can sing and we can leave here with joy in our hearts, knowing that that plot failed. Because death could not hold our Saviour.

And he rose again from the grave. And he continues to make intercession for his own people. O Lord, may it be that in the fullness of time, when our time comes to leave this world, that you will say of each one of us, I died for him and I died for her.

And that we will spend eternity with you forever in glory. Until that day, Lord, keep us all and bring us to the cross.

And enable us all, by faith, to trust in the living, risen Christ. Who is the way, the truth and the life.

And that provides opportunity for sinners such as we are to be saved. How we give thanks for these things this day. Part us with thy blessing, we ask.

[ 69 : 35 ] And grant unto us travelling mercies to our homes. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.