

LIFE GROUP LESSON

John the Life-Giving Gospel • Week of August 23

“Early on Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance” (John 20:1).

Introduction

Can you imagine what was going through her mind! ... Mary of Magdala ... the woman from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons. She had been among the women, who after being healed, followed Jesus and supported his ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Early on Sunday morning, Mary came to the place where she had watched Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus place the body of Jesus (Luke 23:55-56). She is prepared to do what she (and the other women) had not had time to do on Friday: properly anoint the body (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-7). Yet, upon her arrival, she finds the burial cave open and empty.

Background to Scripture

As we prepare to read John, chapter twenty, and step into the scene, think about the great surprises and ‘pivotal points’ across the pages of Scripture. Key events in Scripture reveal God as Father, as Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth; God the Son, Word (*Logos*) made flesh, sent from heaven to redeem humanity; and Holy Spirit, *very* life and breath of the ever-present living God at work in the world. We see glimpses of God’s redemption –

Old Testament

In the beginning ... *God speaks and creation comes into existence (Genesis 1:1-3)*

Call of Abram *Go to the land I will show you (Genesis 12:1)*

Jacob is ‘Israel’ *Your name will no longer be Jacob (Genesis 32:28)*

The Burning Bush *the I AM appears to Moses (Exodus 3:14)*

The Exodus *Israel leaves place of slavery (Exodus 12:50-51)*

Wilderness *Build a Tabernacle so I may live among you (Ex 24:8-9)*

Occupying the Land *Joshua leads Israel across Jordan (Joshua 3:17, 4:19)*

The Temple *Solomon son of David builds a Temple (2 Chronicles 5:1) ...*
Prophecies of coming Messiah

New Testament

Birth Narrative *Messiah is born (Luke 1:31-33, 2:1-20; Matthew 1:21)*

Baptism *Jesus submits to baptism (Mark 1:9-11)*

Ministry *Jesus’ public ministry (Matthew 4:12; Luke 4:14-19)*

Suffering *Jesus’ arrest, trial and crucifixion (John 1 8:1-9, 19:17-20)*

RESURRECTION *(Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:4-7; Luke 24:1-10; John 20:1-18)*

Further Consideration –

All Scripture points to Jesus. Because of his glorious resurrection, all key events – pivotal points across Scripture in light of the Messiah’s resurrection – speak to God’s power to save us. The very power that brought Jesus back from death is the same power which brought forth life when God spoke in the beginning. The same *logos* that spoke in the beginning is the same Jesus who healed the blind, cured the leper, and opened the ears of the deaf. The same power that made sinners whole with a word is the same power that leads us out of death into life.

Read John 20:1-10

Mary runs to find Simon Peter: “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

- Can you hear the frantic tone in Mary’s voice? How startled Peter and John (the other disciple) must have been upon hearing ‘*they have taken the Lord’s body*’ ! In what ways do Peter’s and John’s response speak to their deep longings, questions, faith?
- What do they find?
- To what degree does ‘an understanding Scripture’ inform our faith and actions, according to v9?
- Though v10 seems somewhat anti-climactic, what else were they to do? Where do you go when all you have given yourself to, makes no sense?

Read John 20:11-23

Mary sees two angels in the tomb. Why does it seem she is not surprised to see angels? ... When asked why she is crying, she says to the angels: “because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have put him”.

- What happens, according to vv14-16?
- Imagine hearing Jesus call your name. What is powerful about this?
- Mary wants to hold on to Jesus. But the Lord says, “Don’t cling to me ... but go find my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (v17). Has there been a time you wanted to cling to Jesus and not let go? (share briefly)
- Jesus tells her *go and tell*. This will also be the commissioning Jesus gives his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20: *go and tell!* What does *apostle* mean?

- As the first one sent by Jesus to witness to his resurrection, could we say Mary is the first ‘apostle’ or evangelist?
- Mary Magdalene finds the disciples and declares: “I have seen the Lord!” Notice the disciples are behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. What does it mean to you that the news of Jesus’ resurrection is announced while fear is present?
- What happens, according to vv19b – 23?

Read John 20:24-29

There are times we may find ourselves at a point of fear, like disciples hiding from the enemy; or doubting, like Thomas demanding, *‘I won’t believe unless I see’*. Jesus knows our weakness. He knows when our skepticism leads to anger and indifference. When we find ourselves in such fear and doubt, that’s when we need Jesus more than ever! What happens in vv26-28?

Amid your worst days, know that Jesus will see you through. The Bible says all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Call on him. In vv24-28, Jesus shows up. It’s not the end but the beginning. Jesus told Thomas, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me” (v29). The Lord has so much in store for these disciples, though it’s hard for them to see it. When discouragement sets in, worship. Ask Jesus to take your hand and lead you through. Don’t give up but continue to believe.

Read John 20:30-31

Close in a time of prayer.

One Year Bible Reading

August 23: Job 8:1-11:20, 1 Corinthians 15:1-28, Psalm 38:1-22, Proverbs 21:28-29
 August 24: Job 12:1-15:35, 1 Corinthians 15:29-58, Psalm 39:1-13, Prov. 21:30-31
 August 25: Job 16:1-19:29, 1 Corinthians 16:1-24, Psalm 40:1-10, Proverbs 22:1
 August 26: Job 20:1-22:30, 2 Corinthians 1:1-11, Psalm 40:11-17, Proverbs 22:2-4
 August 27: Job 23:1-27:23, 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11, Psalm 41:1-13, Prov. 22:5-6
 August 28: Job 28:1-30:31, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17, Psalm 42:1-11, Proverbs 22:7
 August 29: Job 31:1-33:33, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, Psalm 43:1-5, Proverbs 22:8-9



Text: John 20

PLAIN TRUTH:

Jesus’ resurrection transforms death to _____, doubt to _____, and _____ disciples to _____ witnesses declaring “Jesus is _____”.

John Gives us Three Life Giving Principles

1. Death does _____ have the _____ word.
2. Jesus did not rise from the _____ so you and I can still remain _____ in _____.
3. Sometimes the only way to great _____ is through great _____.

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