

Outline

Introduction

- Welcome to Rivers Edge
- Core message: God Loves You
- God knew you before birth and desires relationship with you

Opening Scene: Dawn Imagery

- Personal reflection on sitting at dawn
- The half-light moment when day unfolds
- Connection to John 20: "while it was still dark"

The Darkness of Humanity

- "While it was still dark" indicates condition, not just time
- Humanity's state: grief, failure, uncertainty
- Jews: 400 years without God speaking (no visions, prophets, prophecy)
- Gentiles: lost in idolatry and false worship
- God was already at work opening the tomb

The Resurrection Happened in Darkness

- Salvation begins with faith, not sight
- Belief, not understanding
- God's action, not human decision

Scripture Reading: John 20:1-10

Mary Discovers the Empty Tomb

- Mary arrives early, finds stone rolled away
- Runs to Peter and John
- "We do not know" - humanity's confession
- World still stumbles over resurrection

Peter and John at the Tomb

- Both disciples race to the tomb
- John arrives first but doesn't enter
- Peter rushes in
- Grave wrappings lying there, head cloth folded separately
- Detail shows order, not chaos - triumph, not theft
- Deliberate act showing resurrection, not stolen body

Beginning of Faith

- John sees and believes (horaō - perception with understanding)
- Yet they didn't understand Scripture about resurrection
- Faith starts with incomplete understanding
- Faith is heartfelt belief, not intellectual understanding
- God honors honest seeking over perfect knowledge

Scripture Reading: John 20:11-16

Mary's Encounter

- Mary weeping outside tomb
- Sees two angels in white
- Angels positioned where body had been (one at head, one at feet)

Connection to Old Testament

- Exodus 25:18-19: cherubim on mercy seat
- Blood of atonement sprinkled between cherubim
- Jesus as "Lamb slain since foundation of world"
- His resting place becomes site of completed mercy

Jesus Appears to Mary

- Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener
- Irony: Jesus is the Gardener (Second Adam)
- Reclaiming Eden's loss
- Ground once cursed now bears redemption's harvest

The Turning Point: "Mary"

- One word - a name
- Voice that spoke worlds into being speaks identity
- Hebrew qara - covenantal intimacy
- God calling Abraham, Moses, Samuel
- New Covenant echo of divine tenderness

Mary's Response

- "Rabbouni!" (my Teacher)
- Possessive pronoun reveals heart of faith
- Not "the" or "a" but "MY" Teacher
- Resurrection is personal encounter

Scripture Reading: John 20:17-18

Jesus' Instructions

- "Do not cling to me"
- Greek haptou - to fasten oneself, hold on
- Work not yet fully realized - must ascend for Spirit to descend
- Trust by faith, not by touch

New Relationship Declared

- "Go to My brothers"
- First time Jesus calls disciples "brothers"
- Cross completed adoption into God's family
- Relationship shifts: servants to siblings, followers to family
- His sonship eternal, ours derived
- Real family relationship through union with Christ

Mary as First Messenger

- First preacher of resurrection
- Not an apostle but a redeemed sinner
- Chosen by faithfulness and love, not status or strength
- "I have seen the Lord"

What Do We Do With This Story?

Easter's Reality

- Not celebration of optimism but confrontation with reality
- Death is real, sin is devastating, human condition is helplessness
- Good news: none of these are final

- Empty tomb is message to proclaim: "He is not here; He is risen"

Three Life Applications

1. Resurrection Means Forgiveness is Final

- Romans 4:25: "delivered for transgressions, raised for justification"
- Cross was payment; resurrection is receipt

2. Resurrection Means Our Life Has Meaning

- Zoē aiōnios (eternal life) - life of different quality
- Not just future duration but present quality
- Life with Christ filled with meaning, purpose, victory, hope, joy, promise

3. Resurrection Means Our Hope is Anchored

- Christians don't wish - they wait
- Greek Elpis (hope) - confident expectation based on God's character
- Not based on circumstance

Invitation

The Call

- Voice that called Mary calls you out of darkness today
- Some staring into emptiness, hearing truth but seeing only loss
- Jesus still calls names in silence
- He sees you completely even if you don't see Him clearly

The Question

- Not "Is it true?" - evidence is abundant
- Question is "Have you responded?"
- Faith begins when you stop explaining and start answering

The Promise

- Christ calls your name personally
- Wants relationship with you
- Romans 10:9 - confess with mouth, believe in heart
- Unstoppable promise of living Christ

Closing

- When Mary left, dawn had fully broken
- Not because sun rose higher, but because Son of God resurrected
- Same light spilling into our darkness today
- Go and tell: grave is empty, grace is not