

For our Good Friday service, we read of the crucifixion and the burial of Jesus. So on this Sunday morning, we're going to jump right to that Sunday morning, and we're going to take a look at the account of that first Sunday morning after the crucifixion of Jesus, aka Resurrection Day, aka Easter, whatever you would like to refer to it as. That's the day that scripturally we're going to be looking at. So we're going to take the Gospel account of John, we're going to take chapter 20, and we're going to spend some time talking about three different followers of Jesus and their different viewpoints concerning the empty tomb.

The question that you're going to want to ask yourself as we go along through this is how do I see the empty tomb today? day, April 2026, with all of my understanding of the word of God and the world around me, how do I see the empty tomb of Jesus the Christ? Because that is a fact that the tomb is still empty and the historical record of the resurrection is still before us. Now, I know that we cannot see the empty tomb as it was on 33 A.D.

with our physical eyeballs. That moment in time has come and gone. We just were not there for that. And that may seem like a disadvantage to us as it comes to what we believe and the strength of our faith.

But I will prove to you today from both of my messages that that just is not so. We are not disadvantaged at all just because we could not be there to see this with our own eyes. As you will see, pun intentional, as you will see physical sight into the empty tomb and all of its details is far from the be all end all of resurrection day, far from it. John chapter 20 gives us three different followers of Jesus.

That would be Mary Magdalene, Peter the Apostle, and John the Apostle, three different disciples or followers of Jesus who all saw the same empty tomb and the same details inside the empty tomb, and yet at one point in the story they all have three different conclusions that they reach as to what they are seeing. Interesting, right? So we're looking at three disciples who are looking at one empty tomb and drawing three very different conclusions. It is a study that we've done before in this fellowship.

We did it exhaustively, thoroughly. Prior to the merger in 2018, we did it concisely after the merger in 2018. So some of you will know this stuff, some of you won't, But that's beside the point. This is where I felt like the Lord brought my heart for this message this morning.

This is where I think He wants us to be. This is what He wants us to be considering on this resurrection Sunday morning in the year of our Lord, 2026. So let's begin reading in verse one, John chapter 20 verse one. 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 at this time in history, people did not bury their deceased loved ones six feet under. They did not bury them in the ground. They buried them in tombs, which were essentially caves that were worked a little bit by a mason and turned into a sepulcher, a tomb, and that was the typical way to do that. We had a stone mason carve out a large circular stone.

I've shown you pictures of this before, and that stone was positioned so that it could be on an angle rolled to cover the mouth of the tomb. And then in the case of family burials, it could be rolled back up, that little incline. Tougher to do, of course, to prevent grave robbery, but still possible to do to bury the rest of the family members in that same tomb once they died. Those stones that covered the mouths of those tombs were typically about one ton to two ton.

They were extremely heavy. This took a team of men to roll back and forth. Whichever direction it took a team of men. Matthew's Gospel tells us that it was the angel that rolled the stone away.

It was not Jesus. It was the angel that rolled the stone away. But that was not because of the fact that it was too heavy for Jesus. I mean, come on.

in his resurrected state, the stone would not be too heavy for him. That is not why this angel rolled the stone away. He rolled this stone away because even though Jesus didn't need it to get out, his resurrection body was just different. You're going to see in a story later today that at one point in his resurrection body as he's appeared before his disciples, he will vanish, just vanish before their eyes.

No, he didn't need the The mouth of the tomb opened to get out. So why did the angel open the tomb then in the first place? The angel opened the tomb not to let him out, but to let the entire first century AD world in. To look around, to see that it was empty, to inspect it, and from that to draw conclusions.

That is the very thing that we are doing this morning through the text itself. Verse 2, so she, Mary Magdalene, ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. Who's the other disciple church? You all know this well.

This is the apostle John. This was his typical humble signature. This is his gospel. He's writing it.

He would not write his name in his gospel. And he did this in sort of an anonymous and humble way. Sometimes he would refer to himself as just the other disciple, just some guy that was there. At times he'll refer to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Here he gives us both of those titles that he uses for himself in his gospel record. And I think that's just to make very sure that he secures his spot in this moment in history. He wants to make sure that we get the point when we read it that even though he's not going to write his name, he's going to make sure to tell us, I was there. I saw this with my own eyes.

I'm writing something that I know about and no one can convince me otherwise. on in verse 2, and Mary said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. Well where did that come from? That was nowhere to be found between, pardon me, verses 1 and 2.

She has no factual reason at all to deliver this story the way that she has just delivered it to Peter and John, to tell them that the Lord's body has been taken from the tomb. She did not see that happen. No one told her that at the tomb, and Jesus had never predicted that, yes, I'm going to be crucified, but then on the third day I will, dot, dot, dot, be stolen from the tomb by a body snatcher. That wasn't an Old Testament prophecy.

She has no reason to believe this at all. So the question is, where did she get this story? And the answer is she's done something here without investigating, without even going into the tomb. You saw that, right?

She came to the tomb, but she did not go into the tomb. She was on the outside looking in, literally, figuratively, spiritually. That's where she is at this point. She's on the outside looking in.

All she knows is that there was a stone that was blocking the mouth of the tomb, and that it has been moved, and that the tomb is open and empty. And so she does the absolute worst thing that a person can do. She makes an assumption, and it's the worst kind of assumption. What's the worst kind of assumption?

The worst kind of assumption is assuming the worst. And that's what she's done here. I mean, if you're going to make assumptions, at least assume the best, especially if it's about a person. If you're making an assumption about a person's motivations, at least assume the best.

You've heard the statement, give the benefit of the doubt, right? Well, if you're a believer in Jesus and you've been following this God man for three years, I think at this point you at least have to give the benefit of the doubt and I think you have to assume the best. But Mary, she assumes the worst. She assumes that not only did they kill Jesus, but now that they have done gone and stole his body out of the tomb.

And she is not even in the ballpark on this one. She's about as far off as she can be. Now who would the they be? Who is she thinking that has stole the body of Jesus from the tomb?

Who's she thinking? Who's the they? That would be the religious leaders, the Jewish religious leaders of Judaism, because in her mind it just has to be them. They are the only ones with the motive they absolutely hated Jesus.

And for three years they've been trying to figure out how to take Him down, first theologically and then more aggressively, physically through execution. And in her mind, this is the group that, humanly speaking, is responsible for the crucifixion of Christ, so wouldn't it just make sense that this is the same group that has had the body of Jesus stolen from the tomb. Bottom line for the religious leaders, Jesus was bad for their religious system because he was leading people to true spirituality and not just religiosity. Jesus didn't care much for religion, but he loved the true spirituality of a person's heart.

And so in the religious leaders' minds, he had to go. Business was booming for him, in a sense, and not for them, so he had to go. They were losing followers in their synagogues and in the temple, and Jesus was winning them, so Jesus had to go. And that's the way that Mary looks at this, verse 3.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, that would be John, went out with the other disciple and they were going toward the tomb, verse 4, both of them were running together, but the other disciple, John, outran Peter and reached the tomb first. Now you've heard me make a joke about this on many different occasions. The John had to be sure to tell us that he beat Peter in a race to the tomb on that morning. I may have worn that joke out a little bit.

I understand that, so I won't make a joke about that this morning. But just let me say that I think hanging around Simon Peter just naturally caused competitiveness. It's like playing any kind of sport with Maggie. I mean she brings out the blood, sweat and tears because she is so competitive she wants to win.

By the way that won us a basketball title this year. But when you're around people that have these larger than life personas or are very competitive or are in this case, like Peter and Alphamel, who always has to be talking, you know this. He always has to be saying something. He always has to be the guy that gets the last word in, even if it's really, really stupid.

And if something is going on, guess who's going to be in the very center of it? It's going to be, yep, you guessed it, Simon Peter. It's just the kind of person that he was. So I think if you beat Simon Peter at anything, you made sure to record it so that the world would know about it.

That's exactly what John has done here. He has recorded this for the world to know that he won this race, that he beat Peter to the tomb. Verse five, and stooping to look in, he, and this would be John, saw the linen cloth slyng there, but he did not go in. Okay.

Now watch this John gets to the mouth of the tomb first But he does not go in he stops at the entrance of the tomb. What do you think Peter's gonna do? The guy that's always in the in the thick of things right always in the center of whatever is going on What do you think he's gonna do verse 6 then Simon Peter came following him? That's our second reminder Here I got to the tomb first.

Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, verse 7, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself, verse 8. Then the other disciple, John, who had reached the tomb first, that's now the third time that he is telling us that he got to the tomb first, that he beat Peter to the tomb. He also went in and he saw and believed, verse 9, for as yet they did not understand the scriptures that he must rise from the dead.

So Peter gets there and he jumps in with both feet. No thinking, no hesitation, I'll just get in there and get to the bottom of this And I'll figure it out as I go. That was Simon Peter. But John, John gets to the mouth of the tomb.

He stops. He looks around. He contemplates. He doesn't go right in.

Eventually, he goes in. But only after waiting, by the time he's in there, you have Simon Peter in there already scrubbing the place down for fingerprints and DNA evidence, whatever he was doing in there to inspect the tomb. Now we've studied in the past about the differences between John and Peter's personalities. And we developed those character profiles from the scriptures, from stories just like the one that we're reading today.

That John is, at the mouth of the tomb, contemplative, reserved. He's not quick to rush into anything. That is a great personality type, especially when it comes to spending. No amens.

But on the other side of things, there's Peter. Peter runs full speed ahead right into the tomb. This is how we almost always see these two guys. Anytime you're reading about John, he's just very reserved.

He's paced, he's a thinker, not a doer. he thinks first, then he does. Peter the opposite, he does first. Then he thinks if he gets around to it, right?

Sometimes he just does and he never gets to the thinking part. But that's like this is a classic depiction of these two men and their different personality types. So there's a wonderful side lesson in that for us that there is a place for all of our different personality types in the church. You realize that, don't you?

as there was room for every personality type for the Old Testament disciples of Jesus, so there is room for every personality type for the New Testament disciples of Jesus. You and I. God is okay with varying personalities, and we should be too. There should be no such thing as a cookie cutter Christian, you know, like, hey, if you're going to attend this church, here's what we want you to look like.

This is the kind of person we want you to be. This is the kind of stuff we want you to say, this is the kind of stuff we want you to do. There should be no cookie cutter Christian, there should be no mold that we have to feel when it comes to our personalities. And there should be no focus, no unnecessary and negative focus on the differences of our personalities.

The fact is, the greater our personality differences are within the church, the more astounding and beautiful our unity in Christ becomes to the world outside of these four walls. I mean, people are amazed by that. You all are so different. Such different people with such different personalities.

But man, the unity is something that can be felt. You can feel the oneness of all of these varying different personalities. And that's just a part of the work of God's spirit. We read in the Scriptures about the manifold grace of God.

Manifold means many colors, many colors of grace. That means there's all kinds of shades of this. There's unity in the important things and there's diversity in the unnecessary things, the things that we

can be different about. Well, the Lord allows us to, and it's beautiful in the setting of the church.

One more quick word about that before I move on. I do always like to give us a caution that when we speak about our personalities in the church, we encourage you to come to Christ first, get your personalities washed and sanctified, and make that the personality that you present to the church. We do not want your before Christ personality to shine in the church. That might not always work, but if it's your post Christ personality that's been washed and sanctified, that's going to shine in the church, and that's going to be welcome in the church.

One more quick thing, and then we'll get to the meat of it. Just a little side note concerning the folded burial clothes, the folded burial cloths. Let me say it that way. King James Version has me wanting to say clothes.

The folded burial cloths that were found in the tomb. You do realize that was Jesus that did that, right? Don't believe it was the angel that rolled back the stone and then, you know, like provided tomb service, like room service, you know, go and fold the napkin, fold the burial cloths, make the bed. That was Jesus.

So just think about this. He's been dead, well, physically dead, spiritually alive, but physically dead for three days He's reunited with his body, glorified, resurrected. Let me state it with that word. Resurrected.

And the first thing he does after three days of death, or at least one of the first things he does, is make his bed. So if you're a parent and you need some proof text to get your children to make their beds first thing in the morning, I've just empowered you to do so. I don't know, maybe wives, you might even need this verse to use on your husbands. And no judgment up here as the case may be, whatever your family dynamics, use this verse however you need to, and this might just save you a counseling session.

This can be expensive. All right, so all jokes aside, side bars aside, let's now get right to it. The major point of all of this. Look again at verses eight and nine.

After the Apostle John enters the tomb, we read that he sees and believes. He sees the empty tomb and he believes. What does he believe? He believes that Jesus has risen from the dead.

He's the first to believe. And that brings us to the all-important word study for these first nine verses. There are three different ways that these three different followers of Jesus see the empty tomb. You can only uncover this if you study this from the original manuscripts in this case.

This is the New Testament, so this would be the original Greek. Some Christians get nervous about this stuff because there are those of us who You take the Bible literally and believe in the precision of it that you can hang your life and all of your spirituality on every single word that is in here. Not all Christians believe that. Some Christians have their pet doctrines and they build their belief systems around what they want to believe.

And so they make the text say whatever it is and the deeper you dig to the accuracy of the scriptures, the more nervous they get. We're not that kind of church, are we? We believe in the accuracy and the precision of the Scriptures and you get really close. You get very accurate and precise with a good English translation of the Bible, but you cannot get the same accuracy and precision that you can get by reading the original languages that the Bible was written in.

The Greek word here, well actually I'm getting ahead of myself. me just further establish this, that the Greek is not always easy to translate into other languages, nor the Hebrew. That can be difficult at

times. Languages are so different.

There is often, because of that, more to uncover by examining the original manuscripts, and that is definitely the case on this occasion. We're going to look at the word saw, S-A-W, three different uses in four different verse locations of the text that we have just read. The first time it appears or the first usage of it is in verse one and then also I'll throw in verse five as well, verse one Mary saw SAW, verse five John looked in and saw SAW. In the Greek, it is the word blepo, and we get our English word blip from that.

Have you ever heard of a blip on the radar? That's where we get this word, blepo. That's where we get that word, I should say blepo, a blip on the radar. This is speaking about something that comes into your vision.

There's no thinking involved. There's no contemplating. There's no conclusions that are reached. It's just something that you see in your vision.

The second occurrence is in verse 6 where the Apostle Peter saw SAW, that is the Greek word theoreo, and we get of course our English word theorize from that Greek word. So the way that Peter saw this when he first barged into the tomb was a little bit deeper than the way that Mary Magdalene saw it or the way that John saw it from standing outside the tomb. As he gets in there and sees what he sees, he's not just seeing it with physical sight, but he is theoretical. He is theorizing about what it means.

He's trying to reach a conclusion so the gears are turning in the apostle Peter's head. And then the third occurrence of the word Saul is in verse 8 where John finally does enter inside the tomb and sees and believes. The scripture says he saw and believed. It is the Greek word, idon, and we get our English word, idea from that.

This is the fullest developmental stage of seeing that you can have as a human being. Idea means or idon means to see something physically and have insight about it. So it's external sight of something, but then full insight about what you're seeing. It's basically the light bulb moment, you know, you've seen the depictions, someone finally understands something and boom, they pop the light bulb above their head.

That's what this word, idon, or idea, is trying to convey to us. So John looks at it differently. He doesn't just see it. He doesn't just see it and begin to theorize it, but he sees it and he fully understands it.

He knows he believes that the empty tomb means that Jesus has resurrected from the dead. To further support that, the Scriptures tells us immediately not only did he see Iden, but he believes. So John believes in the resurrection as being the logical explanation for the empty tomb. Those are the three different ways that we still see the empty tomb.

There's no other way to see the empty tomb. I know we're not seeing it with physical sight. We are reading it, but we're seeing the text on the page. And those are still the the same ways.

You can read the text, you can see the empty tomb in that sense, as if just blepo, just, okay, it's just something I'm seeing, it's just something I'm reading. Then there's fetereo, you're seeing it, but you're taking it a little bit further than it just being something that's come into your vision, you're starting to theorize about it. You're trying to figure it out. You're trying to reach a conclusion as to what it is that you're seeing and what it means.

And then finally, there is Eden. They're seeing something and understanding the full truth behind it to the point that you believe the full truth. Those are the three different ways to see the empty tomb. You

might look at it like this.

B'leppo is physical sight only. The areto is the transition from physical sight to inner sight or insight, and then I'd, I didn't would be complete and full spiritual insight. And here's how that process should go. If it's not interrupted at any point, the process should go like this.

You begin by seeing visibly something pertaining to the Gospel, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus. Maybe that's the Bible verses that you're reading at home in your own time. Maybe that's the scriptures that you're reading up on the screen. But you see this with your external vision.

Next, at some point along the way, you begin to look upon the concept of the empty tomb with consideration. That's that oreo. We're now in the transition phase from just mere sight to insight or inner sight from external vision to internal vision. And then lastly you look upon the empty tomb with both sight and full insight and you believe that insight can only come from the Holy Spirit and it only comes to those who are open to it and welcome it.

It's a lovely part about the Lord that I so respect. You know how easy it would be for him to convince you to believe in him, his existence, his death for sin, his resurrection, you know how easy that would be for him. But he will not do that. I prayed about that in our opening of this service.

He will not force his will upon another human being. He gives us and respects our free will because he is only interested in our willful and reciprocal love. That's all that he wants from us. So at this point in the story, we have Mary Magdalene.

We'll call her a no. She does not believe that Jesus has risen from the dead. She's told us what she believes. What does she believe?

They swiped the body, those scoundrels. She does not believe. He's a no. We have the Apostle Peter, and he's a maybe.

He's looking. He's thinking. He's contemplating. The gears are turning.

The light's on. Someone's home. Something's happening in the mind and in the heart of Simon Peter. He's making his way toward faith and the resurrection.

By the way, as the story goes, all three of these followers of Jesus, from Mary to Peter to John, they all end up believing, John believes right away here, but they all end up believing forever. Peter and John would take this to their graves, right? They would always believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But for now, we have Mary, she's a no, we have Peter, he's a maybe, and then we We have the Apostle John who once he gets inside the tomb, he is a firm yes.

Mary does not believe. Peter is making his way toward believing and John firmly believes in the resurrection of Jesus. Now I admit that we cannot go into the full proofs of the resurrection of Christ during this short sunrise service because we're trying to do just that. We're trying to keep this short.

But we do have many infallible proofs as the author Luke would call it, infallible proofs. I concur there are infallible proofs in the scriptures and we just can't cover them today. But all that I can do is just make you aware of the fact that we have studied those proofs exhaustively. If you've been in the church for a while you know that.

done quite a few studies on the infallible proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We've even done two entire studies where we took our faith, our Christian faith, and we put it on trial without bias. We use the legal laws and rules to make a judgment on whether or not we have a reasonable faith to believe in

the resurrection of Jesus. done many studies to that end.

They are available 365 days of the year, 360 days a year if you're working from the Jewish calendar. They're available every day of the year, every year for free. And you can track those down and you can learn about all of the infallible proofs that you want. They're all there for you to study and consider because it is important for you to choose which way you will see the empty tomb in the resurrection of Jesus.

It is internally and eternally important that you make up your mind on this matter. The difference between saved and unsaved, the difference between Christian and non-Christian, the difference between believer and unbeliever, this all comes down to how we see the empty tomb and what we believe about the resurrection of Jesus. You're either choosing not to believe or you're giving the Lord maybe some further consideration. You're thinking about it.

You're theorizing it or you're a firm and a full permanent. Yes, I believe. And here's why That is why that is so important. Full belief in the resurrection of Jesus is the only thing that saves.

And that is what saves. It doesn't save to be a participant in religious things and to see things with your vision and to hear things with your physical ears. That does not save. It does not save to even reach that middle phase of the process and be a ponderer.

Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Like really, truly, do you believe? Well, I'm thinking about it. Trying to figure it out.

That is not saving faith. There's only one saving faith. Saving faith is I believe Jesus bore my sins, took them to the cross, nailed them to to his cross, died, was buried for three days, rose again by his own power, resurrected, ascended back to the Father, where he sits to intercede for us every day at the right hand of the Father. That is saving faith and only that.

It's not your religious works, it's not how good of a person you are, it's not how How good you are at avoiding curse words. How good you are at avoiding addictive behaviors. It's none of that stuff. None of that saves.

Religious stuff doesn't save. What saves is a true heart level, genuine faith in Jesus and His resurrection. Let's close with these three verses. John chapter 3 verses 16 through 18, for God said love the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

How do you get eternal life? Believe in Him. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned.

How do you avoid hell? Believe in Jesus. But whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. There's one way of salvation that's been provided and you take it or leave it.

If you choose the wrong direction in life, if you choose the wrong destination for eternal life, you can't blame Him. He's informed you of the way. He's paid the price for the way. He rose to victor the way, to champion the way for us.

And then He said, it's this simple, if you want to be saved, here's all you have to do. Believe that I've saved you. If he's made it that easy, what's the statement? This statement is how much he loves us.

If he didn't love us the way he does, he might run us through hoops on this. Well, if you want to get to heaven, we have a five-step plan. Start with this, go to that, accomplish this. He doesn't jump us through hoops.

It's this simple. I love you so much. I've done everything that I can to save you from your sins. The only thing that I'm asking that you do in return is just truly believe that I have done that for you.

Pretty reasonable agreement, wouldn't you say? so stand. Let's close in a word of prayer. Lord, let us close on this high note of praising You for Your love for us, for Your work for us, and for Your care over our lives.

How How could we not be grateful? How could we not be filled with joy, especially on a morning like this? The moment of victory for the sinner who desired to be saved from their sins. The moment, Lord, when salvation was etched into stone.

Thank you for what you've accomplished. Thank you for openly sharing your entire plan with us, your entire heart with us through the Scriptures. And thank you for each person in this place right now for whom you have opened up a heart of faith within them. Thank you for that, that is a work of the Spirit and we praise you.

blessed the rest of this day our 1030 service we ask that your spirit be with us in a mighty way to administer to us that you would lift hearts that you would challenge us that you would encourage us that you would correct us Lord whatever it is that you need to do within us that you might do it that you might have free reign as the King in this place for the course of this day in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Amen. God bless you.

Go home, get a nap, whatever. Maybe it's breakfast time for you. If you've already had breakfast, maybe it's a brunch, whatever it is. Get it done.

We hope to see you back here at 10.30.