

## THE RISEN CHRIST

### ("I AM ASCENDING TO MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER")

**John 20:1-31**

**Key Verse: 20:17b, "But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"**

Happy Easter! Jesus has risen! Chapter 20 of John's Gospel proclaims the glorious resurrection of Jesus. No human being has ever truly risen from the dead. Though Lazarus was raised, he eventually died again. But Jesus rose victorious over death and ascended into heaven, becoming the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. And all who belong to him will also rise when He comes again.

In today's passage, John presents multiple evidences of Jesus' resurrection. Also, he shows us how the risen Christ opened the disciples' spiritual eyes to recognize his glory. They received his resurrection message: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father." When they encountered the risen Christ, their sorrow was turned into great joy. They received the Holy Spirit and became witnesses of the resurrection, carrying the gospel to the whole world. May God open our hearts and help us believe in his resurrection, so that he may be our Father and we may live as his resurrection witnesses.

First, the Empty Tomb (1-10)

It was Sunday, the first day of the week. While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. Who was Mary? She had once lived a troubled life and had been possessed by seven demons (Lk 8:2). But Jesus cast them out and restored her. From then on, she followed Jesus faithfully. Mary stood near the cross and witnessed his death (19:25). She saw where his body was laid (Lk 23:55). [image of Mary] Early on Sunday morning, she came to anoint his body with spices (Mk 16:1), because she loved Jesus, her good shepherd. She did not know how to remove the heavy stone sealing the tomb. But she came anyway and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. In distress, she ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him" (2). The "other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved" refers to John, the author of this Gospel (19:26).

[image] Peter and John ran to the tomb. It was like a running race between Ashton and Victor. John arrived first and looked in, seeing the linen cloths lying there, but he did not enter. Then Peter came and went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths, and the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head was folded up separately (6-7). It was as if Jesus' body had simply passed through them. Then John entered, saw, and believed (8). He believed that Jesus had

risen. Thus, Peter and John became witnesses of the empty tomb, evidence of Jesus' resurrection. Yet they were not ready to go and tell the good news, because they did not understand the Scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead (9). They returned home with a mixture of relief and hope.

#### Second, the Risen Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene (11-18)

[image of Mary at the tomb] After the disciples left, Mary remained outside the tomb, weeping. As she looked inside, she saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been--one at the head and the other at the feet (11-12). These were attendants of the risen Christ. Jesus had told his followers many times that he would rise again, and Mary had received great love from him. Yet she was still weeping because she did not yet believe in his resurrection. This shows that without the resurrection, all people--regardless of their circumstances—remain in sorrow and despair.

The angels asked, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Then she turned and saw Jesus standing (13-14). But she did not recognize him. Her grief had blinded her. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away" (15). Her only remaining hope was to anoint Jesus' body with spices. Yet Mary was chosen to be the first to see the risen Christ. Still, she did not recognize him because she had not yet understood the meaning of his death and resurrection. Jesus said to her, "Mary." At that moment, her spiritual eyes were opened. She turned and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher) (16). Hearing Jesus call her by name changed everything. Her sorrow turned to joy. She could now see the risen Christ. This encounter foreshadows the glorious reunion between God and his people when Christ comes again. We can see Jesus in glory and we can meet our beloved ones again in his resurrection. The late Dr. Samuel Lee lost his mother when he was only eight months old. He longed to see her, even in his dreams. After accepting Jesus as the resurrection and the life, he served the Lord wholeheartedly, looking forward to meeting both the risen Christ and his mother in glory.

After meeting the glorious risen Jesus, Mary was filled with joy and wanted to hold on to him forever. What was Jesus' response? Look at verse 17. [Let's read together.] "Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Jesus told Mary not to cling to him because he had not yet ascended to his Father. The risen Christ would soon ascend to heaven and be seated on the throne of God as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16). He reigns the world with justice and righteousness as the Sovereign Ruler over humanity and history. On that day, he will come again in glory as the Judge, to judge the living and the

dead. Therefore, Mary was not to hold on to Jesus merely for his physical presence on earth, but to embrace Jesus as the mighty God and everlasting Lord who reigns in heaven. Instead, Jesus gave her a mission: “Go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” The risen Christ entrusted Mary with the first proclamation of the resurrection. He blessed her to go and deliver this good news to his disciples. The message was clear and glorious: “I have risen, and I am returning to my Father in glory.” This is a declaration of Christ’s complete victory over death—the last enemy. Gracefully, Jesus called his disciples “my brothers.” Through his death and resurrection, God the Father became not only his Father, but their Father as well. This reveals a restored relationship and a new family formed by grace. It is also his promise that he is preparing a place for them in heaven and will come again to take them to be with him in the Father’s house. Just as Christ became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, so also we will be raised and clothed with glorious heavenly bodies.

Lydia Shin experienced deep trauma after losing her parents at a young age. The weight of death overwhelmed her. But she encountered the risen Christ and heard His words: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). In the moment, her fear of death vanished, and her grief was transformed into joy, filled with the hope of one day reuniting with her parents in heaven. In that glorious reunion, her mother will play Chopin’s Nocturne, her father will sing “I’d Rather Have Jesus” in the heavenly chorus, and Lydia will share her victorious life testimony in worship of the Lamb, the glorious risen Christ.

Look at verse 18. “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’—and that he had said these things to her.” Mary became the first witness of the resurrection, boldly testifying, “I have seen the Lord.”

### Third, the Risen Christ Visits the Disciples (19-23)

The disciples were together with doors locked for the fear of the Jews. Once they had been bold enough to say, “We will die with him” (11:16; 13:37). Now they sat in silence, gripped by fear behind locked doors. Suddenly, the risen Christ came and stood among them, even though the doors were locked. He said, “Peace be with you!” (19b). When the disciples heard his voice, saying, “Peace be with you,” their fear vanished. The peace of God came upon them and overflowed from their hearts. The risen Christ is God, who gives men true peace and the Holy Spirit. Without faith in the resurrection of Jesus, no one can experience the peace that comes from heaven. Jesus then showed them his hands and his side. They saw the nail marks in his hands and the scar in his side. It was truly Jesus, the Risen Christ. When they saw him face to face, they were filled with great joy. Their fear turned into joy--heaven came down, and his glory filled their souls.

What did Jesus do next for his disciples? In verse 21 he said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” God so loved the world that he sent his Son as the first missionary to save them from their sins (3:16). Jesus fulfilled his mission by offering himself as a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world in obedience to his Father God. In the same way, the risen Christ sent his disciples into the world as his messengers to proclaim the good news of eternal salvation. But how could they go out into the world when they were weak and fearful? Look at verse 22. “And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” The risen Christ would soon ascend to the Father to be seated on the throne of God. Yet, he would not leave them alone. He promised to be with them always, to the end of the age through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:20). The Holy Spirit--the Spirit of Jesus--filled their hearts. With the Holy Spirit, they could see the glory of the risen Christ and boldly preach the gospel with wisdom, power, and love.

Look at verse 23. “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” God alone can forgive sins. Jesus entrusted them with the authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins in his name. Whoever hears the gospel and believes is forgiven, but whoever does not believe remains under condemnation (Mk 16:16). In this way, the disciples were sent into the world to proclaim the good news of forgiveness in Jesus’ name, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The proclamation of the gospel is a rescue mission--to save people from eternal condemnation and to bring them back to the kingdom of God.

Once, in Chicago UBF, there were seven young missionaries who came from Korea. They were full of passion and zeal for campus evangelism and world mission—but they struggled with English. One of them even went to Dominic’s and asked a pharmacist, “Hey, I am a headache; give me a pharmacy!” Dr. Samuel Lee gathered them every Tuesday night from 6:30 to 11:00 pm and trained them in English fluency for more than four years. He patiently corrected their pronunciation and intonation, especially the ending “--ing.” Through his guidance, the seven of them—including me—became fruitful self-supporting missionaries with teaching professions.

Through that language training, I received one word from God: “Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10b). Teaching at CPS was demanding and challenging, but Jesus was with me, enabling me to serve students for 30 years until I retired. With God’s Word and the help of the Holy Spirit, I continued visiting UIC after work for outreach and discipleship. Now, I am getting older, and my memory is not what it used to be. Yet I want to rededicate myself to campus discipleship and world mission—as a silver missionary! May God bless UIC and all other campuses with many growing disciples and make Chicago UBF a missionary sending church for world evangelism.

Fourth, Jesus Appears to Thomas the Doubter (24-31)

The risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and wiped away her tears. He also visited his disciples, granting them the peace of God and the Holy Spirit. However, Thomas, called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came (24). When the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, he declared, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe” (25). Thomas struggled with doubt. He loved and respected the other disciples, but he could not accept their testimony. For him, seeing was believing. Eight days later, the disciples were gathered again in the house, and this time Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them (26). In his gracious humility, the risen Christ came specifically for Thomas. Jesus said to him, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side” (27). The risen Christ invited Thomas to touch his wounds. As Thomas saw the nail marks in Jesus’ hands and the scar in Jesus’ side, his doubt vanished. The Holy Spirit opened his eyes, and he recognized the risen Christ. He exclaimed, ‘My Lord and my God!’ (28). This was an act of worship, acknowledging Jesus as God Almighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords. His personal confession of faith was not from human insight, but a divine revelation from God (Mt 16:16-17).

[image of UIC conference] At the Conference last weekend, the resurrection messages were powerfully proclaimed among the UIC students. Theo, Rafael, Dylan, Charles Kang, Sydney, and many other students were called to be the witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. May God bless NAYAC and WMC and call us and the campus students to be the gospel workers and missionaries to the world.

Look at verse 29: “Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’” Earlier, Thomas had asked Jesus to show him the way, and Jesus taught him that to know the Son is to know the Father (14:5–7). Yet Thomas had relied on sight rather than on Jesus’ word. Now Jesus teaches that those who believe without seeing are even more blessed. By trusting the Word of God, they can see the risen Christ through faith. They experience heavenly joy and the transformation of the inner person when they believe in the resurrection of Jesus. After meeting the risen Christ, Thomas was completely changed. He became a bold witness, even going far away, to India, to share the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus performed many signs in the presence of his disciples to help them know and believe that he is God, who through his death and resurrection gives us eternal salvation and the kingdom of God as our inheritance (vv. 30–31).

[image] The tomb was empty because Jesus had risen. He appeared to Mary, to the disciples, and to Thomas. When they encountered the risen Christ, their sorrow turned into joy, their fear into peace, and their doubt into faith. Through his resurrection, Jesus gave them a living hope, saying, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father.” He gave them the Holy Spirit and sent

them out to share the good news. Praise God, who gives us eternal life and the kingdom of God through his death and resurrection! May God bless us to go and tell others with confidence and joy, "Jesus has risen; I have seen the Lord." Amen.