

Lookin' For Love In the Right Place - Easter Sunday

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Date: 09 April 2023

Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[0 : 00] Good morning. Good morning. There is nothing but joy in serving a risen Lord and a God of grace, and in serving in the last seven weeks, I just want to mention, we sold, served 3,630 meals.

It wasn't always easy, but it was great. Back to business. We're reading from the book of John this morning, chapter 20, verses 1 through 8, the word of our Lord.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him.

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb.

[1 : 27] He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and one at the foot.

They asked her, Woman, why are you crying? They have taken my Lord away, she said, and I don't know where they have put him. At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there.

But she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?

[2 : 48] Thinking he was the gardener, she said, Sir, if you had carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him. Jesus said to her, Mary.

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said, Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am ascending to the Father, and your Father to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, I have seen the Lord.

And she told him that he had said these things to her. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Friends, let's pray together.

Almighty and gracious God, we give you thanks for this moment and what this morning means to us. We give you thanks for your willingness to bear all that we could not so that we might taste true victory, true peace, and true love.

- [3 : 56] And now, Lord, with our hearts open, with so much that we celebrate, we come. Please continue to move among us and plant that seed in each of us that you know we need, seed that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and the glory of your name.
- Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. So as I said, it's been quite a journey over these past few weeks. as we have talked about all the different ways we can look for love in the wrong places.
- Now, we have talked about how we do it, why we do it, and the ways in which the Jesus helps us not do it. Today, we come and recognize the right place.
- Now, as you were getting ready this morning, how many of you read the paper or watched the news? Oh, wow.
- That's probably very healthy. That's probably very healthy. Because the problem that we know is there's so much in the news that does not usually help us when we're trying to be in a celebratory mood.
- [5 : 08] We know that our world has a ton of bad news in it. That you can experience a lot more stress, a lot more anxiety, a lot more worry if you keep feeding your soul those things.
- Now, the thing about that is, is the more that we seem to take in of that sort of stuff, the more it seems to impact us in ways that we don't want.
- Here's a question I want you to wrestle with. Do you let the world continually impact you or do you choose to impact your world?
- Because the issue that many of us are finding here is that even though we claim the resurrection, we claim the good news of Jesus Christ, that news still seems to sink into us and we seem to be more overcome by it than the fact that Jesus has overcome the world.
- And that's where we need to spend a little time today. Because there's a whole lot of bad news in the world, but we are supposed to be the people of the good news.
- [6 : 30] and if we are the people of the good news, then we need to bear witness to that fact. Now, why we want to spend a little time on this is the story itself.
- Because Mary, Magdalene's story in this, is the one that is speaking so powerfully to us this morning. What we want to remember about this is that Mary had been with Jesus throughout his ordeal, throughout his time of suffering.
- That she was most likely in the upper room during the last supper. That she most likely went with the group to Gethsemane.
- But as we know from all of the gospel accounts, that she was also there at the cross. We also know from those accounts that she saw where Jesus was buried.
- And so, on this, the first day of the week, she goes to the tomb. And the thing about it is she goes with an express purpose.
- [7 : 50] She goes to anoint his body because the burial rituals had to be done so quickly that they weren't done correctly. They weren't complete. And so, they went to anoint the body.
- The key for us to remember is that she, even she, went expecting to find death. death.
- And, when she got there and the tomb was open, death was still on her mind. Because she doesn't jump up and run back to the disciples and say he is risen.
- She runs back to them and says, they have taken his body away and I don't know where he is. death. Then, they go back.
- She brings Peter and John with her. Same interlude occurs, but then, she encounters the risen Christ.
- [8 : 54] See, the thing is, how many of us keep expecting to see and find death in the world but God, I want you to sit there for a minute.

You look for death. You expect death. You see so much happen, but God. How many of us in here got a but God story?

Yes? A few of us got a but God story. That the doctor told me that this was going to happen, but God. The bank told me that this was going to happen, but God.

My boss told me that this was going to happen, but God. How many of us got a but God story today? And those of us that know those stories know what it means to celebrate resurrection.

In a world where there is so much death, we are a people of resurrection because we know that things can look a certain way, that the world will tell us a certain story, that our eyes will tell us a certain story, but God.

[10 : 18] And that's what we are here about today. That's what we are here for today. You see, the thing is, is if you've got one of those stories, or if you know somebody who does, the key is that that idea of looking for love in all the wrong places, we still do it because we're human, but we also know that there's a better way.

We also know that that's not where we belong, our human nature drags us into it, but the greatness of this story, the greatness of our truth, is the fact that we are loved in spite of that.

That God loved us so much that not only did we have Friday, but we get today. That is the power, that is the grace, that is the amazing truth of our God.

And if you find yourself in a place right now where your world feels so full of bad news, remember that you are a person of the good news, because we have a story to tell the world.

We bear witness to a risen savior, not a defeated and dead savior, savior, a risen savior, one who has given us real and true victory over this world.

[12 : 00] What we have to be able to do is be courageous enough to live like that. So often we let the things get to us.

As I said, does all that stuff creep into you and impact you, or do you impact your world? Because as people of good news, there is a world that needs the word, that needs the love, that needs the truth, that only we as the people of good news can bring it.

You see, the thing is our God keeps showing up in all these unexpected ways. when we talk about looking for love in the wrong places, remember that you've seen love in all the right places.

But see, the world will tell you that the right place is not the back room where the animals are kept, yet that's exactly where God chose to show up in the world.

People would say that the wrong place would be at the base of an instrument of humiliating torture and death. Yet it's the symbol of who we are.

[13 : 17] Most of us wear it around our neck on our t-shirts and we hang it all over the place. It's because we know it is in that we are set free. And just like we said this morning, most people would not think that a graveyard would be the right place to find love.

And yet God shows us that he loves us enough to overcome the power of death for us. We have looked for love and found love in the right places.

So now, as a person who knows that truth, will we, as the body of Christ, make sure that the world knows that truth?

Will we show the sick among us that the body of Christ is alive? alive? Will we show the poor among us that the body of Christ is alive?

Will we show the world, the oppressed among us who are fighting against systems that hold them back, that the body of Christ is alive? We are builders of beloved community and justice, just like he was, just like he still is.

[14 : 36] Brothers and sisters, love has indeed won. Love has indeed overcome all that we fear, all that we've done, and all that the world would try to tell us can't possibly be real.

Love has indeed won. Be, for this broken and hurting world, the people of good news, so that the world will come to understand what we know to be true.

Amen? And amen. Loving and gracious God, we celebrate the fact that you have shown us the truth that sin is broken, that death is broken, that we are indeed free.

Lord, let us live as a people who understand and live in that truth. Let us bear witness to it in the world, just like Mary.

I have seen the Lord, we will say with our lives, not just with our mouths, and the world will be transformed as you so dream for all your children.

[15 : 56] In the name of our risen Lord, we pray. Amen. Amen. We have talked about the power of love and the ability to bear witness to your faith.

We celebrate the fact that we serve a risen Savior who is in the world today. We celebrate the fact that the body of Christ is alive and well, and the world will know.

If you look for opportunities to put your faith into action this week in our church family, we have two Bible studies coming up that you want to be interested in. There will be a Bible study on the book of Luke that you heard me share with our new members, as well as our Tough Stuff Bible study, which is on the 25th of April, where we talk about difficult issues through a scriptural lens.

You also have the ability to serve through our rummage sale, which will be coming up on the 29th, and you can talk to any of our United Women in Faith to find out more about that particular piece.

If you are also interested in any of our missions, our missions coordinator will be out by the mission station as soon as you head towards the door, and you can talk more to him. about those things.

[17 : 01] Note that we have some great hospitality available to us in the Fellowship Hall today. I want to thank Lynn and Beth especially for coordinating all of that work, and for those of you who may be with us for the first time today, whether you are online or whether you are here in the building, please check out more information.

Those of you online can look at our website. Those of you here in the sanctuary can stop by the visitor station on your way out as you head to the Fellowship Hall. Now that said, let us receive our benediction for the day.

Go forth into the world, looking for love in all of the right places. The Lord's sign of the Lord, we only ask of all, we show the world and all the always in this.

Now in the name of God, our Creator and King, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our Counselor and our Sustainer, May God bless us as we leave to love and serve God and all of God's children.

Amen.