**THE RISEN JESUS, MY LORD AND MY GOD**

April 1, 2018

John 20:1-31

Key Verse 20:28 “Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God.’”

All people’s story ends in the tomb. If John’s gospel ended in chapter 19, it would have been a beautiful but a tragic story of Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus rose again from the dead, conquering the power of death. The resurrection is the event without which there is no Christianity, without which there is no salvation, without which there is no forgiveness. When God raised Jesus from the dead, he was declaring that he was satisfied by Jesus’ perfect sacrifice, had accepted it as full payment for the sins of his people. Resurrection then demonstrates that sin was atoned for, death was conquered, and eternal life is available to those who believe. It is impossible to be a Christian and not believe the resurrection. Romans 10:9 says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Furthermore, not only is there no salvation and no Christianity if Christ didn’t rise, but if Christ didn’t rise, then he is a liar and a deceiver and a fraud, because he said many times that he would rise again in three days. If we pull the resurrection out of Christianity, we have nothing left. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, Paul writes, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless; If Christ has not been raised your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” Jesus’ resurrection changed our human history forever. Now Jesus is reigning from heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has made us to be a kingdom and priests to reign with him in this world. But when we look at the world, it does not seem that we are winning the victory in this world against dark forces of evil. The world seems too corrupt and we don’t feel that we are reigning in this world. So we take Thomas’ attitude, “Unless I see God’s miracles, I will not believe.” I pray that you may be convinced of Jesus’ resurrection and believe that Satan has been defeated and our victory is assured, and make a confession of faith by saying, “My Lord and my God.”

**First**, the Risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. Look at verse 1. “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” Why did Mary go to the tomb in the early morning? She went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body as an act of love. Mary had once lived a sinful life. As a result, she was possessed by seven demons. But she was healed by Jesus’ gracious word of life. Since then she began to follow Jesus and supported Jesus with her own expense. Then Jesus was crucified on the cross. That night, she cried endlessly because she did not know why such a good man as Jesus had to be condemned and crucified. So she prepared spices and waited all night to anoint Jesus’ body. Though big-mouth disciples ran away when Jesus died on the cross, Mary followed Jesus to the end even to the grave.

When she got to the tomb, however, she saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. What a disaster! She assumed that his body had been taken away by his enemies. Mary came running to Peter and the other disciple, and said “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him” (2). The other disciple, the one Jesus loved in verse 2 refers to John himself. Peter and John ran to the tomb. John outran Peter and reached the tomb first perhaps because he was younger, but he was too fearful to go in. On the other hand, Peter boldly went in and saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The author stresses the fact that the cloth was folded by itself, separated from the linen. It was lying there in regular folds as if the body of Jesus had simply vanished. Peter and John went and saw inside the tomb. Thus, they became witnesses of the empty tomb.

The point of saying that the linen cloths were there, and even mentioning the cloth that were wrapped around his head, is to show how this resurrection was different from Lazarus’ resurrection. Recall from chapter 11 that Jesus raised Lazarus after he had been dead four days. John 11:44 says, “The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’” People had to help Lazarus out of the linen strips and face covering. That is because he had a mortal body. He would die again. After the resurrection, Jesus did not have mortal body. He would never die again. Jesus’ body is different. He simply passed through those grave cloths the way he passed through doors in verses 19 and 26. “Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them” (20:26). But at that very moment of entering the room like no ordinary body can, he says to doubting Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands. Reach out your hand, and put it in my side. Stop doubting and believe” (20:27). This was a physical body that you could recognize, and touch. And Luke tells us he ate fish after he had risen (Luke 24:43). This is very important. Those who are in Christ—that is, who believe on him, will be raised with him. Paul says in Philippians 3:21 that Jesus “will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control.” If you belong to him by faith in him, you will receive a body like his. This glorious resurrection body will not decay, and will not be subject to sickness. It will be suited to see him and enjoy him and enter finally into the new heavens and the new earth where you will spend eternity worshipping God. And this world that we love so much, compared to that one, will be like a candle compared to the sun.

The other disciples went back home. But Mary stood outside crying. Mary's last hope of anointing Jesus’ body with spices was gone, and she was endlessly sorrowful. It seems that she was born to be sorrowful. How did the Risen Jesus help her? Look at verse 15. The Risen Jesus asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” She was crying because she was sorrowful, thinking of her life without Jesus. Jesus asked her, “Why are you crying?” He meant, “You don’t have to cry anymore because Jesus is risen, defeating the power of sin and death.” Jesus was crucified and died. Jesus was buried in the tomb. But Jesus rose again from the dead as he had promised. He did not just come back to life like Lazarus who died again. But he rose again to live forever in the glorious resurrection body. Now the Risen Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Judge for the living and the dead. So she should be joyful. But she was crying because she did not meet the resurrected Jesus yet. Mary loved Jesus more than anyone else and served God’s work. But when she did not meet the Risen Jesus, she could not but live a sorrowful life of faith with unsolved sorrow problem. There are many people who serve God’s work faithfully but have sorrow in their faces. Because they did not solve their sorrow problem, they sigh and cry and complain about their situation when small sorrowful things happen. They live a life of faith with fatalism. This is because they did not meet the Risen Jesus. Jesus called her quietly by name, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Look at verse 17. “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 my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” After meeting the glorious Risen Jesus, Mary was so happy that she wanted to hold on to Jesus forever and spend time with him. What Mary wanted was an everlasting human relationship with Jesus on earth. But Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father...” Jesus allowed Thomas to touch his resurrected body, but this time he forbade it because the Risen Christ wanted to give her the holy mission to be a witness. Jesus knew that a man without mission has to cry. Jesus also gives her a living hope that she will see him and be with him forever in the kingdom of God. This is truly good news to all people. We can call God as our

Father and our God because Jesus’ death made us holy children of God. Jesus’ resurrection gave us a living hope in the kingdom of God. In the meantime on earth we should live as witnesses of his death and resurrection.

**Second**, the Risen Jesus appears to his disciples. What were the disciples doing when the glorious news of the new era knocked at their door? They were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. Peter had once been bold enough to say, “I will lay down my life for you.” Now, however, he was full of fear, and so were the other disciples. There were three reasons that they were fearful. Firstly, they were afraid that Jerusalem Sanhedrin police were coming to arrest them, and they would be crucified like Jesus. Secondly, their dream was shattered when Jesus died. They wanted Jesus to restore the Kingdom of Israel. They had a worldly hope in Jesus. But Jesus died tragically and their dreams died together. Thirdly, they lost their life security. They were unemployed. They left their jobs to follow Jesus. Now their future was uncertain. When they looked at their future, they were captured by fear. As they sat terrified behind locked doors, they must have listened carefully to every footstep on the stairs and trembled at every knock on the door. They were overpowered by fear. How did the risen Jesus help them? Look at verse 19b. As they sat there, the Risen Jesus was suddenly in their midst. He said, “Peace be with you.” This was more than an ordinary greeting. He was blessing them with the peace of God, the peace that only the Risen Jesus can give. In this world there can be no real peace or rest, no real joy or hope. The world is full of anxiety because of the power of Satan. Because of fear, many young men try to escape from the realities of life by means of watching porn and watching Youtube, or drinking. When the disciples saw the Risen Christ, the power of death disappeared from their hearts. When they heard “Peace be with you,” the peace of God was overflowing from their hearts. It was a time of salvation for them, for they heard the voice of the Risen Christ.

Living in this world we become fearful. We are fearful that there are so many smart people around us. We are fearful of our future security. Most of all we are fearful for the final exam in coming weeks. So we ask ourselves, “How can we go out and preach the gospel? How can we attend Bible study and worship service?” So many lock themselves in and only try to solve their problems. They are those who do not have faith in Jesus’ resurrection. But when we believe in Jesus’ resurrection, the Holy Spirit fills our heart and fear disappears. We can believe that God is the Almighty Creator God. Nothing is impossible with God. God can give life to the dead. God can make the hearts of stone of U of T students into the hearts of flesh. When we believe in Jesus’ resurrection, the things of the world look temporal and our value system changes because the kingdom of God is our inheritance. May God help us to believe in Jesus’ resurrection and solve our fear problem.

**Third**, the Risen Christ appears to Thomas the doubter (24-30). Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came the first time after his resurrection (24). When the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, he declared, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (25). Thomas’ rationality told him that Jesus could not have risen from the dead, and his friends were all hallucinating. He was probably filled with grief when Jesus died and wanted to be alone. He became depressed and started to withdraw from the fellowship. Because he was overwhelmed with sorrow and depression, he started doubting God’s love and everything he believed. Even though Thomas was in doubt, Jesus, in his grace, visited Thomas. Jesus embraced Thomas with his doubt and showed him the nail marks and wounds on his side. Then Thomas’ eyes were opened and he confessed, “My Lord and my God!” (28) There are many questions regarding Thomas. Thomas means twin. So the question is “Who is Thomas’ twin?” We do not know. In terms of doubting, it could be me; could be you. All Christians, sometime during their life, sometimes more than others, will doubt and question God. Doubts, questions and skepticism often lead to deeper faith.

A theologian Henry Drummond makes a distinction between a doubter and an unbeliever. A doubter is a person who searches for God and the godly life; the person is on a journey, a search to find God and the love of God. Not an unbeliever. An unbeliever isn’t searching for God but for the pleasures of this world. A doubter is a person who has a thousand questions for God; questions about life, purpose, sufferings and evil. Not the unbeliever. An unbeliever isn’t asking questions about God, the divine dimension. The unbeliever is apathetic to God and the God question does not really come up in his or her daily life. A doubter struggles with God and struggles to live a godly life and struggles to find the purpose of life, but not an unbeliever. An unbeliever simply struggles to pay the bills, find a spouse, and find a job. That is all. There is an enormous difference between an honest and questioning doubter and an unbeliever who does not struggle with the God question and the divine dimensions of life.

But even though we doubt, there comes a time in life where we begin to doubt our doubts, question our questions, and become skeptical of our skepticisms. We start to understand that our doubts, questions and skepticisms are a phase of our life and that we actually become fixated with our questions, doubts and skepticisms. Jesus wants us to believe. There is power to faith. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (29). He meant that once he ascended to heaven, he would send the Holy Spirit who would live within believers from then on, enabling us to believe that which we do not see with our eyes. This same thought is echoed by Peter, who said of Christ, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9). Billy Graham began to doubt his faith when his friend, Charles Templeton, challenged that the Bible was flawed and could not be trusted. One night he walked out into the woods and set his Bible on a stump of a tree and cried out: “O God! There are many things in this book I do not understand. There are many problems with it for which I have no solution. There are many seeming contradictions. There are some areas in it that do not seem to correlate with modern science. I can’t answer some of the philosophical questions Charles and others are raising.” And then he fell to his knees and the Holy Spirit moved in him as he said, “Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word—by faith! I’m going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be your inspired Word!” I pray that as Thomas fell on his knees and confessed, “My Lord and my God,” we too may fall on our knees and confess, “My Lord and my God.”