

Looking into the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Sunday of the Resurrection, Easter; April 16, 2017; John 20.1-18

This morning is not so different from that first Easter morning.
Looking into the resurrection of Jesus Christ through John 20:1-18, what do we see?

The “you’ve-got-to-take-a-look-at-this-for-yourself” look, vv. 1-2 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 she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

Mary Magdalene comes early Sunday to Jesus’ tomb. Who is she?
She says to John and Peter, “you’ve-got-to-take-a-look-at-this-for-yourself.”
It’s the encouragement to look that we need before belief can develop.

The initial look, vv. 3-5 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

John reaches the tomb first and stoops to take an initial look.
Seeing the linen strips convinces John that Jesus’ body has not been stolen.
This initial look on Easter morning is enough to get John thinking.
The initial looks of C. S. Lewis and Dr. Francis Collins bear mentioning.

The inquiring look, vv. 6-7 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

Peter takes an inquiring look evaluating the details.
The folded face cloth—a neat and tidy resurrection! Jesus makes His bed after rising.
It rules out grave robbers and nullifies the story of the disciples stealing the body.
The evidence mounts for the resurrection making historical sense:
the empty tomb, grave clothes, the transformation of the disciples, the tomb never venerated, women as first witnesses, politically dangerous, hundreds of eyewitnesses, its beginning in Jerusalem, Joseph too well known to be defamed, etc.

The believing look, v. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed,

Now two men see the linens making their testimonies admissible under Jewish law.
John takes a second look and believes.
But they still need to see from Scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead.
It means the disciples do not fabricate a story to fit their hopes.
They are confronted with certain facts as they look and evaluate.
We need to evaluate what we see on Easter. Our eternal life depends on it.
Who is Jesus Christ, and is He resurrected from the dead?

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The biblical look, v. 9-10 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

The Jewish hope for resurrection is clear in the Old Testament.
The biblical look means Easter is expected.
They take home the mystery of the faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.
Can you imagine Mary's reaction? She has such a burden and a blessing.

The personal look, vv. 11-16 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

Angels first minister to Mary weeping at the empty tomb.
Jesus now stands there, but can He really be?
Jesus asks, "Whom are you seeking?"
Belief and faith depend largely on what and who we're looking for.

Ask, seek, and knock Jesus says, and we will find.
Jesus speaks her name. Now Mary sees. She takes a personal look at Jesus on Easter.

The church look, vv 17-18 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.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus will cling *to them*.

Jesus now sends Mary to church.

Jesus directs us into the church to live our faith in Him together.

Faith in the Risen Messiah is always personal but never private.

Word, sacraments, worship, mission, fellowship, and prayer sustain our faith.

Looking at Easter, what do we see?

What faith do we confess?

What hope do we have?