



"Hope Is Risen" (John 20)

I. INTRO

- A. Happy Easter! Today I have the privilege of walking with you through the resurrection narrative from John's Gospel (chapter 20).
- B. John's gospel account is different from the other three gospel accounts. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "Synoptic Gospels" (*syn*, "together with"; *optic*, "to see"; thus "to see together").
 - 1. The Synoptic Gospels follow basically the same language patterns, material, and order of events and are more descriptive in their approach (written 20-30 years after the resurrection).
 - 2. John's Gospel, on the other hand, is more reflective in its approach (written about 60 years after the resurrection).
 - a. While we see the events through John's eyes, we now see them after John's had plenty of time to reflect – and fill in some gaps.
 - b. John makes more frequent use of symbolism and double meanings – which we will see today...
 - 1) John, who wrote 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John as well as the book of Revelation, has emerged as a masterful storyteller.
 - 2) He is honest and detailed in his gospel account.
- C. I'm going to invite two philosophers to go on this journey with us this morning to help us process and think through John's gospel narrative.
 - 1. One is a highly regarded contemporary French philosopher who believes that Christianity is, by far, the BEST religion or life philosophy out there YET he remains a humanist and atheist. His name is Luc Ferry and his insights are from a recently published book, titled *A Brief History of Thought*¹ (267 readable pages).

¹ Harper Perennial 2011.

2. The second philosopher, who will join us at the conclusion of our journey this morning is the late Francis Schaeffer, a 20th century American Evangelical Christian theologian, philosopher, and pastor.
3. In chapter one of *A Brief History of Thought* Ferry asserts that ALL philosophy – both secular and religious, is seeking to deal with one thing and one thing only: our fear of death (p. 7). Ferry calls all philosophy a “quest for salvation.”
 - a. He says, “human beings are the only creatures who are aware of their limits. We all know that we will die and...those we love, will also die” (p. 2).
 - b. He says to live well, to live freely, to be capable of joy, generosity, and love, we must first and foremost conquer our fear of death (p. 5).
 - c. And this is where Ferry says philosophy and religion diverge (p. 5). Ferry believes that religion is a mere substitute for philosophy (p. 17). The “religions demand humility” (p. 5) while philosophy requires reason (p. 6).
 - d. He says philosophy will overcome our fear of death through “clear sightedness rather than [the] blind faith [of religion]” (p. 6).
4. Ferry says that our contemporary western culture is much like the early Greek philosophers – we are desperately trying to stay distracted so we don’t have to think about death.
5. Before we go to John 20 and the resurrection narrative I would like Luc Ferry to help us exegete (to interpret or explain) the beginning of John’s gospel...
 - a. Ferry has a chapter in his book entitled, “The Victory of Christianity Over Greek Philosophy,” and he points to the genius of John (and of Christianity) in the first chapter of John’s Gospel with how this happens:
 - b. In Greek thought there was a word that described the impersonal, yet harmonious and divine structure of the entire cosmos. That word was LOGOS.
 - 1) To the Greeks LOGOS was divine because it was perfect and rational in its order. LOGOS was the marriage of The Divine and The Rational.
 - 2) John begins his gospel as if he were addressing the Greeks with this word LOGOS – this divine, rational, impersonal force that holds the structure of the cosmos together:

"In the beginning was the Word [LOGOS], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." --John 1:1-4

- c. Reading these verses all the Greeks would have been nodding in agreement. They would have had no complaints at all.
- d. But when the Greeks get to what John says in 1:14 it would have freaked them out:

"And the Word [LOGOS] became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" --John 1:14

- 1) This would have blown every Greek's mind – Furry says it would have been "sheer madness for the Greek sages" (p. 62) to believe that this divine, rational, impersonal force that holds the structure of the cosmos together had actually become a Person was crazy talk to the Greeks!
- 2) John is saying that this LOGOS that holds everything together became a Man and made His dwelling among us. This is what Christians refer to as the incarnation – God in the flesh.
- 3) I love how *The Message* paraphrase states this:

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." --John 1:14 (MSG)

- e. Then John masterfully connects this Greek thought to the Hebraic thought that the LOGOS is "*from the Father*" and is "*full of grace and truth*." So what John is doing is he is masterfully weaving both Greek and Hebrew thought into one storyline. It's Holy Spirit inspired genius.
 - f. John is saying to the Greeks that Jesus is the LOGOS (in the flesh) and to the Hebrews John is saying that Jesus came to us from the Father and is God in the flesh.
6. If we had to reduce the message of the NT, the message of the gospel, into one simple phrase it would be: **Death has been defeated by love.**
- a. John addresses this very specifically in John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” --John 3:16

- b. This is where Ferry says that Christianity defeats Greek philosophy (1,500 years): Death has been defeated by love.
- D. So, let’s take these thoughts about death – and John’s reflective account that seems to be morally, ethically, and intellectually superior to Greek thought and walk through John’s resurrection account in chapter 20:1...

II. BODY

A. *“¹Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.”*

1. *“Dark:”* Greek word: *scotia*: is metaphorically used of ignorance of divine things, and is associated with wickedness and misery. This is part of the symbolism and double meanings that John is interjecting into the gospel narrative.
2. John is saying, reflecting back, that while the resurrection already happened we were still in a darkened state of not understanding. Perhaps like some of you today...

B. *“²So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’ ³So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. ⁴The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; ⁵and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.”*

1. John refers to himself as *“the other disciple whom Jesus loved.”* Is John saying that Jesus loved him more?? ☺
2. John is saying that not only did Jesus love him more but that he was faster than Peter and got to the tomb first.
3. We don’t know why John didn’t go in. My best guess would be a combination of respect for the dead as well as deferring to Peter, who was the *de facto* leader of the apostles. (And let’s keep in mind that Peter was just a couple of days out from committing the worst sin of his life – denying Jesus three times.)

C. *“⁶And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the face-cloth which had been on His head,*

not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up [folded] in a place by itself. ⁸ So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰ So the disciples went away again to their own homes."

1. Peter ran right past John into the tomb – as was his custom. Peter could at times be more reactive than responsive ("ready, fire, aim").
 2. If someone (Romans or Jews) had stolen the body of Jesus they would not have removed the face cloth or the linen wrappings because Jesus would have been a bloody mess.
 3. *"There were many who were appalled at Him - His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness."* --Isaiah 52:14
 4. Apparently, because of the orderliness of the scene – the grave clothes folded neatly, John believed.
 5. Every aspect of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah had been prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures long before the events ever unfolded in the timeline of human history.
 - a. There are over 350 Messianic prophecies in the OT – all fulfilled in Jesus.
 - b. There are over 20 related to the crucifixion and resurrection – all fulfilled in Jesus.
 - c. Jesus had told them plainly what was to happen during their three years of ministry together.
 6. What John is saying is that, for him, he had received the content but the Scriptural dots had not been connected for him yet – but 60 years later he's had time to reflect and see the beauty and perfection of the Scriptures.
- D. *"¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ And they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.'" ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ 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.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew,*

“Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).¹⁷ Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and that He had said these things to her.”

1. Here we come to, perhaps, the meatiest portion of the narrative. We must make at least **two important observations**...
 - a. The first is to consider the symbolic significance of the two angels.²
 - 1) The setting is a garden cemetery. Remember that the Bible starts in a Garden called Eden. With God walking with Adam and Eve in an intimate paradise of perfection.
 - 2) Then paradise was lost when the woman gave the man the deadly fruit and he ate it.
 - 3) But now a woman, Mary Magdalene, is told to announce life to men. A woman delivers the message of Him who has been raised from the dead.
 - 4) And if you recall in Genesis, there were two angels that stood guard at the entrance of Paradise Lost when Adam and Eve were expelled?
 - 5) Just like the two angles that were sitting in the tomb of Jesus.
 - 6) What John is saying is that what was lost in the Garden of Eden has been reclaimed in the Garden Tomb. What has been lost in the Garden of Eden – the active accessible presence of God, has now been reversed and reclaimed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - b. We must also address Mary’s encounter with Jesus.
 - 1) At first Mary encounters Jesus and does not recognize Him. (We see this also in Luke’s account of Jesus joining the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.) Sometimes in moments of intense grief or disappointment we fail to recognize the presence of Jesus -- Mary was momentarily spiritually blinded.
 - 2) Additionally, we need to pay close attention to the interplay between Jesus and Mary in v. 16:

² One theologian notes that there were two gardens, two women (Eve and Mary), two gardeners (the first Adam and Jesus, the second Adam), and two sets of angels.

- a) *"¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means, Teacher)."*
- b) This has been called the shortest and most dramatic sermon in the Bible: **"Mary!"** When you hear Jesus call your name it changes everything.
- c) One commentator says this: *"In six short syllables, 'Ma-ri-am' and 'Rab-bou-ni,' and in just about that many seconds the world became a different place. Death, once final, has met its match. There is a reality — Someone — more final than death. That is the compact meaning of this meeting. If it really happened, everything in life takes on a completely new significance. Is there any other meeting, anywhere else in Scripture or in world history, as dramatic or as important as this one-verse meeting?" --Frederick Dale Bruner ³*

E. I will now read through v. 29 with minimal comment and then we will close by comparing the philosophy of Luc Ferry with Francis Schaeffer:

"¹⁹ So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.'"

²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing ["stop doubting and believe" –NIV].' ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to

³ Fredrick Dale Bruner. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Eerdmans 2012: 1,151.

Him, 'My Lord and my God!' 29 Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'"

III. CONCLUSION

- A. So, the contemporary, humanist, atheist philosopher says that Christianity is, hands down, the best thing that has ever been offered to humanity. (So, why isn't he a Christian you ask?)
1. But he says, "it's too good to be true" (p. 11). So he wants to live as wisely and harmoniously with the earth as he can.
 2. Ferry shows his cards early on in the book, I don't know if you caught it when I presented an overview in my introduction: Ferry says philosophy will overcome our fear of death through "clear sightedness rather than the blind faith of religion" (p. 6).
 3. This is where the thinking of Francis Schaeffer comes in...
- B. Schaeffer wrote a book entitled, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*.⁴ There is an appendix (B) in the book that addresses the issue of faith and whether or not we have the capacity to interact with God. "Faith vs. Faith" It should REALLY be titled: Faith vs. Blind Faith.
1. Schaeffer would say that the Christian faith is not a blind faith at all – but an invitation to interact with a loving and compassionate God. He says, "One must analyze the word *faith* and see that it can mean two completely opposite things."
 2. Suppose we are climbing in the Alps and are very high on the bare rock, and suddenly the fog shuts down. The guide turns to us and says that the ice is forming and that there is no hope; before morning we will all freeze to death here on the shoulder of the mountain. Simply to keep warm the guide keeps us moving in the dense fog further out on the shoulder until none of us have any idea where we are. After an hour or so, someone says to the guide, 'Suppose I dropped and hit a ledge ten feet down in the fog. What would happen then?' The guide would say that you might make it until morning and thus live. So, with absolutely no knowledge or any reason to support his action, one of the group hangs and drops into the fog. This would be one kind of faith, a leap of faith [or what has been called "blind faith"].

⁴ Tyndale; 30th Anniversary ed. 2001.

3. Suppose however, after we have worked out on the shoulder in the midst of the fog and the growing ice on the rock, we had stopped and heard a voice which said, 'You cannot see me, but I know exactly where you are from your voices. I am on another ridge. I have lived in these mountains, man and boy, for over sixty years and I know every foot of them. I assure you that ten feet below you there is a ledge. If you hang and drop, you can make it through the night and I will get you in the morning.'
 4. I would not hang and drop at once, but I would ask questions to try and ascertain if the man knew what he was talking about and if he was not my enemy. In the Alps, for example, I would ask him his name. If the name he gave me was the name of a family from that part of the mountains, it would count a great deal to me. In the Swiss Alps there are certain family names that indicate mountain families of that area. In my desperate situation, even though time was running out, I would ask him what to me would be adequate and sufficient questions, and when I became convinced by his answers, then I would hang and drop.
 5. This is faith, but obviously it has no relationship to the other use of the word. As a matter of fact, if one of these is called faith, the other should not be designated by the same word.
 6. The historic Christian faith is not a leap of faith [or blind faith] ...because *He is not silent*, and I am invited to ask the adequate and sufficient questions, not only in regard to details, but also in regard to the existence of the universe and its complexity and in regard to the existence of man. I am invited to ask adequate questions and sufficient questions and then believe Him and bow before Him metaphysically in knowing that I exist because He made man, and bow before Him morally as needing His provision for me in the substitutionary, propitiatory death of Christ.
- C. There are four words that explain the gospel message. We can view it as an equation: God + Sin + Christ + Faith = The Gospel
- D. I am going to close by praying a prayer of salvation. This prayer should not be prayed in an overly emotional or desperate moment. It should be prayed with careful thought and consideration given to the four words on the screen: God + Sin + Christ + Faith = Good News.
- E. As I close with a prayer of salvation I want to thank you for coming – and I would like to invite you back next week for our Spring Family Fest after the 11am service.

- F. Let's pray as the worship team comes – and there will also be people available to talk with you or pray for you after the service: "Kind Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from You. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life and turn toward You. Please forgive me, help me, and empower me to live for You. I believe that your Son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite You Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me serve You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

P.A.S.S. Questions For KHC Life Group Leaders (or personal study)

Sermon Dates: March 27, 2016

Sermon Title: Hope Is Risen

Sermon Passage: John 1:1-4, 14; 20:1-29

P - Participation (get everyone involved in the dialog)

1. The disciples had given three years of their lives to serve the cause of Jesus. It must have been a huge disappointment when He was killed. Without going into too much detail, tells us about a time when you experienced significant disappointment.

A - Application (makes it personal)

2. As you read the story in John 20 try to view it from the perspective of Mary and the disciples. What emotions do you imagine they were experiencing as the story unfolds?
3. Why do you suppose Mary doesn't recognize Jesus at first? (v.15) What awakens her to the reality that the man is Jesus?

S - Scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

4. Notice how Jesus gives Mary and the disciples a "mission"—see vs.17 and 21. What does this tell us about our relationship with Jesus?
5. How many different emotions do you suppose Mary goes through in this narrative? Make a list them.

S – Sharing (aim for a time of honest reflection, authenticity, and transparency in a safe atmosphere modeled by you).

6. How would your life be different without the message of Easter?
7. Resurrection and life are not things that we have to wait until the end of time for. Jesus gives resurrection and life here and now to those that follow Him. This life goes beyond the reality that someday we will be resurrected from the dead and is rooted in the fact that eternal life begins now. If the resurrection is true, how would you like your life to be different from here on out?