

Looking for the (Risen) Lord

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well—April 17, 2022—John 20:11-18

Introduction

He is Risen. He is Risen indeed.

What are you looking for? We'll be looking for Easter Eggs and amazing barbecue later on but right now we're looking for the Risen Lord!

Joke: The devil ain't nothing but a snake. Which means Satan ain't got no arms and Satan ain't got no feet. Well, that's because on Easter Satan was disARMed and deFEETed!

We better open up the Scriptures. Pastor Sarah gave an awesome message last Sunday that was a little shorter than normal. So I'm taking that extra time this morning. I'm so thankful Sarah is on our pastoral and teaching team.

John 20:11-13a

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

^{13a} They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

- They know why she's crying. Why put her through this?
- She's grieving the loss of her friend and wants closure.
- Be present with Mary in this moment of grief and pain and loss and mourning.
- **Luke 8:1-3** After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

John 20:13b-15a

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

^{15a} He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

PRAY!

Lola once was lost!

- Our Good Friday didn't start out so good. I noticed Maris and Maddox looking around the house.
- I asked, "What are you looking for?" They both said, "Lola!"
- Lola is our Beloved Cat that was born just over a year ago and we adopted a year ago. She was one of the highlights of 2021 for our family.
- If we're friends on Facebook or Instagram you've probably met Lola and seen her in her cat backpack which she loved at first and decreasingly likes.
- We began searching the house, looking for Lola. The calm search grew more frantic.
- Maddox needed to leave to walk to school with his neighbor and friend. He asked, "Is she dead?"
- I had opened the garage door to take out recycling and she must've got out. I had killed Lola. It was getting intense.
- The tears began to flow! The emotions ran high. There was so much going on in that moment.
- Both Maris and I needed to get to work. Maddox needed to get to school.
- But we need to find what we were looking for—Lola!

What are you looking for?

- Rest
- I started trying to walk with Jesus at age 7, 34 years ago.
- I'm a firstborn, Enneagram 1, with a strong bent towards self-righteousness which comes with a heavy dose of self-critique and at times self-hatred and feelings of extreme worthlessness...sometimes even when things are going ok. That makes me tired. When I don't reach the standards I have in place for myself the self-talk isn't friendly and the way I relate to those closest to me isn't kind. That makes me tired.
- It's at this point in trying to prepare this sermon that tears flowed down my face and I had to take my glasses off giving me the double whammy of not being able to see well, no glasses and streaming tears.
- Church work, trying to help people connect with Jesus and with one another in meaningful ways. That makes me tired.
- Nonprofit work, trying to cast vision for how we can together make progress on the greatest challenges facing our community. That makes me tired.
- Marriage, the ongoing need for me to engage with my family of origin challenges and move towards intimacy with my wife, and I'm not talking about physical intimacy here. That makes me tired.
- Parenting, so many parent fails with a few wins peppered in.
- I'm looking for the One who can invite me with these words, ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

What are **YOU** looking for?

- Freedom, Healing, Hope, Friendship, Wisdom, Leadership
- Maybe you don't even quite know what you're looking for but you're trying all sorts of things to see if that's it.
- Maybe you're here because you know you're looking for something even if you don't know exactly what it is. That's ok. I welcome that. I welcome you. I'm often in that place myself.
- Or maybe you've forgotten what you're looking for like when you go downstairs to get something and can't remember what you're doing there. Let's remember together what we are looking for.
- Back to our story where Mary is looking for Jesus.

John 20:15b-16

^{15b} Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

- Sorrow to joy, death to life, lost now found!

Lola once was lost but now is found!

- Just then, as Maddox was walking by our vehicles, he heard a, "Meow!" And there, lo and behold, was Lola, the Beloved Deaver Cat! I couldn't believe it and yet I did believe it. She had leaves stuck to her fur. She smelled like a leaf pile. It was as if she had risen from the dead in our hearts. We were so happy. Joy filled our souls. What once was lost, now was found!
- So, what are YOU looking for? Or maybe you've stopped looking altogether. We call that loss of hope.
- Believing Lola has returned from the neighbor's backyard is a bit easier than believing Jesus has returned from the dead...but both may be true. One I've seen with my own two eyes, and touched, and heard....

Mary was looking for Jesus but Jesus was also looking for Mary and found her!

Mary once was lost and now is found—multiple times now. Remember her story?

John 20:17

¹⁷ 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 my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Tetelestai – It is finished.

At the end of the work day you tell your boss, "Tetelestai." The work is complete.

- **Colossians 2:13-15** ¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.
- It is beginning.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
- New creation inaugurated by the physical resurrection of our Older Brother, and King, Jesus!

Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Mary's faith (and the disciples)

- Deconstruction and Reconstruction is par for the course when following Jesus.
- Fulfilled Scripture
- Evidence of the Resurrection
- Redeeming experience with a Christ-follower or a church community
- **John 20:8-9** ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Ever open the fridge to look for the ketchup and you can't find it? And your spouse yells, "It's right in front of your face!" And it is?

Five Easter Facts to help you see what you're looking for.

Is the Resurrection possible? Yes or no?

- No? How do you know? You're sure that the Resurrection isn't possible? Science says that dead men don't come back to life, right. Well, if science said that dead men rise from the dead quite often then Jesus' Resurrection would not be significant, would it?
- Yes, the Resurrection is possible. Well, now then, the implications of that possibility are huge. Don't you think it would be worth a little further investigation if it's possible that Jesus rose from the dead?
- The greater the claim the more evidence needed! The closer the claim hits home the more evidence I need. I get it. The evidence is there for you to investigate!

The Minimal Facts Method:

If you can order a drink from Arrow Coffee you can track with what I'm saying. Some of y'all are stressed out trying to order your spouse's drink from the coffee shop!

1. If this book is divinely inspired, Jesus is raised from the dead.
2. If this book ISN'T divinely inspired but is reliable, Jesus is raised from the dead.
3. What if this book ISN'T inspired and ISN'T reliable but is just on the level of something like Homer and Plato, just a book from that time? Jesus is STILL raised from the dead!

Resurrection did not happen, say quarter of Christians

- BBC Article on April 9, 2017
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-39153121>

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

Five Easter Facts

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. Jesus' disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them.
3. The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.
4. The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.
5. The tomb was empty.

Fact #1: Jesus died by crucifixion!

The Annals of Tacitus by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (Senator and historian of the Roman Empire; written around 116 AD; not a Christ-follower), Passage 15.44—Follows a description of the six-day Great Fire of Rome that burned much of Rome in 64 AD,

- "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators,
- Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular."

The Antiquities of the Jews by Titus Flavius Josephus (first-century Jewish scholar; written around 93-94 AD; not a Christ-follower) Book 18, Chapter 3, 3

- “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease.
- He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”

No one questioned whether or not Jesus lived and died.

- It was clear that he had died. The Roman centurions were experts in killing. There was no question mark in people’s minds if Jesus had died.
- The theory that Jesus hadn’t really died didn’t come about until later. It’s called the “Swoon Theory” or “Apparent Death Theory”, the notion that Jesus faked His death. The more we learn about what actually happens to the body during a crucifixion the more certain we become that Jesus definitely died.
- In many ways, modern medical evidence should bolster our belief that Jesus really died.
- *The Case for Easter* by Lee Strobel may be helpful in convincing you that Jesus really died.
- Jesus really lived and Jesus really died by crucifixion. The historicity of that fact is so clear.

Did Jesus really rise from the dead? The claim is that yes, Jesus of Nazareth has risen indeed!

Reasons to believe in the physical Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Fact #2: Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them. They claimed it and they sincerely believed it.

1 Corinthians 15:5-7 ⁵...and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles...

- The disciples were cynical, skeptics with unmet expectations. Remember Jesus riding in on a donkey from the Mount of Olives to the praise of the people? They thought he was King Messiah who had come to overthrow Rome. But that didn’t happen. Instead He died a brutal death by crucifixion.
- Paul encourages his readers to go ask people who saw the Risen Jesus! Talk to the 500 people. You know there’s a buzz around town about who those folks are.

- Just 40 days later or so at Pentecost Peter was preaching that Jesus had raised from the dead.
- Peter had already denied Jesus while He had still been alive...but then after Jesus' death he completely changes his tune. Why?
- **Acts 2:22-24**
 - ²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—
 - ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."
- **2 Peter 1:16** For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.
- Early refusal to deny. People may die for a lie. But people don't die for something that they know is a lie.
- The disciples never got political power, never got wealthy. Most died as a result of their claim, often with torture.

Fact #3: The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.

1 Corinthians 15:3-9 ⁸ ...and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

- Paul was definitely not predisposed to believe that Jesus, the person whose followers he was seeking to kill, had risen from the dead. But Paul's life changed on a dime. He did a 180 turnaround. That's crazy historically. That doesn't just happen unless something significant happened.
- Paul was not a crazy person. Just read his writings.

Fact #4: The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.

1 Corinthians 15:7a Then he appeared to James...

- This isn't some random and vague Elvis sightings. Elvis Presley died 40 years ago. People claim they spotted him. None of these claims are substantiated in the least. They're ridiculous.
- But here we have the brother of Jesus, a big time skeptic, all of the sudden claiming that his big brother, Jesus of Nazareth, who clearly died, rose from the dead. That's significant.
- **John 7:5** For not even his brothers believed in him.
- **Mark 3:21** And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."
- **James 1:1a** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

Fact #5: The tomb was empty.

The Jerusalem Factor, The Principle of Enemy Attestation, The Testimony of Women

1. The Jerusalem Factor
 - The following of the Risen Jesus took root in Jerusalem, the very place Jesus was buried. Where's the body? There wasn't even an attempt by the opposition to produce a fake, dead body.
 - I've been to Jerusalem. It's not that big of a place.

2. The Principle of Enemy Attestation
 - Any source that does not have sympathy for a certain person, message, or cause comes to affirm something about it. When writers or enemies corroborate the given facts or data, it is more likely to be authentic.
 - Failure to exhume the body. The Jewish leaders came up with the theory that Jesus' disciples stole the body. See Matthew 28:12-14.

3. The Testimony of Women (The Criterion of Embarrassment)
 - The Gospel accounts document that women were the first to discover an empty tomb. The testimony of women weren't considered reliable by the Jewish community. The only reason that all four gospels would include this detail is if that's how it really went down. Notice that even in the earliest creedal statement that Paul is using when writing to the Corinthian church that it doesn't mention the women being at the tomb first. The creed mentions the men because that was what was significant as eyewitness testimony to the ancient world. When Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John went to document the event they recorded the significant and true details.
 - Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*—But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex. Nor let servants be admitted to give testimony, on account of the ignobility of their soul; since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment.
 - Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:8—"whatever testimony a woman is unfit to give, they—for example, dice rollers and those who lend money on interest—are also unfit to give"
 - "Go to my brothers and tell them..."
 - **John 20:18** Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

The early church simply didn't care where the tomb of Jesus was. It wasn't until the 4th century that Constantine's mother went searching for the burial spot of Jesus Christ. Then the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was founded at the supposed spot.

Church of the Holy Sepulchre photos—Construction & Veneration

- The deeper they dig the more evidence they find that corroborates the Scriptures.

What are you looking for? The Risen Lord!

Does the Resurrection matter? Does it really matter if Jesus really rose from the dead or is it alright to just think of it as a figurative rising from the dead, a rising in our hearts?

It's the difference between a merely natural world and the reality of the supernatural. So yes, it matters! Apart from an actual, literal, physical resurrection of Jesus, Christianity ceases to exist!

Without the Resurrection...

1. Without the Resurrection my faith is futile

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

2. Without the Resurrection Jesus isn't King Messiah, He's just some dead guy that shot His mouth off—

Romans 1:3-4 ³ ...concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord...

3. Without the Resurrection becoming a good person is dependent on me and that's not good.

Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- We're left with humanly-keepable niceness.
- And honestly, if not for life in Jesus I don't even want to be that nice.

4. Without the Resurrection this aging 41-year-old body of mine is all I get.

- **1 Corinthians 6:14** And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.
- **Philippians 3:20-21** ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

John 20:18

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- Sorrow to joy, death to life, lost now found!
- **Luke 24:36-43** ³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.
- **1 John 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Invite the Worship Team up.

Invite everyone to stand with hands open to receive.

- I invite you to reconstruct your faith (or build it for the first time).
- I invite you to respond to the voice of Jesus.
- I invite you to receive His invitation to Himself, to His Scriptures, to His community.
- I invite you into the PRESENCE of God.
- I invite you to live connected to the Risen Lord, the one you are looking for and who is looking for you!

Prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer*

Almighty God, who through your Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Chopping Block:

- Mary's tears
 - Mary stood weeping (v. 11)
 - She wept (v. 11)
 - Why are you weeping? (v. 13)
 - Why are you weeping? (v. 15)
 - Crying activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) which helps your body rest and digest. The benefits aren't immediate, however. It may take several minutes of shedding tears before you feel the soothing effects of crying.
 - Aaron and Kayla crying at their wedding
- Eyesight
 - Vision tests and seeing reality
 - The lens of Jesus
- My story
- Tear, emotions, weeping
- We need the right lens.
- No one has perfect eyesight.
- Hermeneutical spiral
- "My Lord" defined
- Where are you positioned in relationship to the empty tomb?
- Which Jesus do you seek?
- 2 Corinthians 2:8-10
- Revelation = unveiling
- Trying to hit a fastball – At some point you've got to swing for the fences.
- Marriage – The stuff marriage provides vs. the relationship of marriage
- Religion has worked for me decently...until recently.
 - God's calling me into depth of intimacy with Him
- In for a penny, in for a pound...
- The myth of certainty and the risk of commitment
- Life after life after death
- Nearsighted – We can't see things that are far away.
- John 20:8-9
 - Saw and believed but didn't yet understand
- What happens in the seats should spill out into the streets.
- Scale up for more programs, scale down for more relationships.
- The greater the claim and the closer it hits to home the more evidence needed. Why are people so adamantly opposed to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Because this claim demands a response from them. I don't have to do anything in light of the rule and reign of Alexander the Great way back in the day or the claimed sighting of Elvis Presley

recently. I'm not going to spend time on those two figures. But Jesus Christ, now if that's a true story then my whole life has to change.

- What will it take to bring you to a tipping point to take the next step of faith? God wants to have a relationship with you beginning today if he doesn't already have a relationship with you.
- Faith is cumulative. It builds over time but there comes a time when you need to make a decision. Today, is the day to believe in and follow Christ! You come to a tipping point.
 - Illustration: Deciding to marry Maris.
- **John 20:1-10**
- 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. ² 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!" ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.
- **John 1:35-42** ³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter^[a]).
- John 9 – Jesus heals a man born blind
 - 9:37 "You have seen him..."
 - 9:39 "...those who do not see may see..."
- **John 20:24-29** ²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "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." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and

believe.”²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

- *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* by Gary Habermas and Michael Licona
- I’m gonna pretend I didn’t see that!
- Looking for love in all the wrong places!