

Meeting the Risen Christ: The Reality of Easter

John 20:1-10 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 17 April 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Name a time when someone really surprised you with a gift or party etc.

Worship: [Psalm 16](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [John 20:1-10](#) (*Read aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

“Never let anything so fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of the Christ risen.”

– Mother Teresa

“Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song.”

– Pope John Paul II

Jesus is risen! We who look to Him are raised up with Him. Everything is new – for us and all of creation – even when it may not look like it yet. But for all the pain and conflict and brokenness in the world, we can be left with the gnawing question: *Did Christ really rise from the dead?* Needing Easter to be true doesn't make it so. Paul, in First Corinthians, admits that if Christ isn't raised, we are to be pitied more than all other peoples. John's way of addressing the question is to take us to the empty tomb on Easter morning and to show us how all things are new and renewed in light of Christ's resurrection.

The Dawn of a New Era // Easter is not an ending, but rather a beginning – the beginning of a renewed world and a new creation. In the last chapters of John, we see condemnation, guilt, and shame are passing; hope, honor, and acceptance coming. He started his account of Jesus tying things back to creation, saying that the Word of God was with the Father from before those beginnings, and that the Word coming forth from God brought all things into being at the first creation. Then – with the coming of Jesus into the world – the Word of God took on flesh and made His dwelling among us. And now, John is beautifully revealing that after His death, Jesus rises to begin a whole new world. Easter is the eighth day, the first day of a new era. The way the first Christians sought to capture this newness was to change the flow of their week — from worship on the last day as Israel had done since their formation, to the first day of the week: the day of this new creation. We rest first, because we rest in the One who has died and risen again for us.

Dealing with Expectations in New Ways // As people encounter the Risen Jesus, huge significance is placed on His scars. They prove who He is; the One who was crucified has risen. Those scars prove His sacrifice was accepted, and that in His sacrifice we may be truly healed. Even trauma and suffering can be woven into the fabric of God's story. Mary wanted space to grieve and mourn; Peter and John wanted clarity and protection. But Jesus had something better, something surprising: resurrection life and mission, which would involve sadness and loss, mystery and danger, but also joy and fullness, vision and hope. These first Christians became people who could release control and embrace the surprises the Risen Jesus would bring. Somehow, arrests could be used as spaces for God to bring miraculous deliverance, or to help jailors come to faith, or to have their blood spilled as martyrs that would water the seeds of Easter that were being planted all around.

Newly Approaching Faith // There are so many plausible, grounded reasons to place our faith in the Risen Christ. The facts are strong for us, just as they were for witnesses two thousand years ago. But the key to our faith is to understand and embrace God's infallible, inerrant promise that Christ would rise according to the Scriptures. This

story is so much clearer for us that it was in their time: a God-given faith in a God-given Word that brings us into life that is truly life. Easter is filled with living hope. Not because we can prove it as fact with absolute certainty. It happened, and we can have ultimate confidence that it did – not because of all the circumstantial evidence, which is astoundingly great, but because God says so in His Word, which points us to a Risen Jesus at its center. Our reasons to believe will always demand faith, but so does all human reasoning. It's a matter of whether we choose to place our faith in God and in His story.

Discussion Questions *(You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)*

Dawn of a New Era

- Discuss all the evidence found in this passage of the reality of Christ's resurrection.
 - What did the disciples not yet understand but we fully do?
 - How would you describe the Easter account to a person exploring Christianity?
- How does knowing that Jesus rose from the dead shape our daily life as Christians?
 - How does it affect you personally and specifically?

Dealing with Expectations in New Ways

- Who do you identify with in this passage: Mary, Peter, or John (the other disciple), and why?
 - What were their hopes and expectations in coming to the tomb that day?
- What is Mary's first thought regarding Jesus' body according to John 20:2?
 - How do the undisturbed linens and John's own eyewitness testimony provide evidence to the contrary? What other evidence is compelling to you?
- When were you last surprised by God in a way that went beyond your expectations and hopes?

Newly Approaching Faith

- If Jesus can conquer sin, death and the grave, then what else does He have power and authority over?
 - How can we be more intentional in not taking Easter and the Gospel for granted?
 - How would you describe how faith and belief change on the other side of the resurrection?
- How do you respond to [John 20:1-10](#)? What questions do you have?
 - What can you praise, confess, thank or ask of God? (See Engage and Experience below.)
- How does God use community to remind us of the Good News of the resurrection?
 - Is community necessary? Why or why not?

Prayer

Continue to pray for the situation in Ukraine, for peace, Christ's mercies and intervention. Pray for new and non-believers to attend the Christianity Explored Groups and for our Easter Offerings for Hope for LA. For this week's Prayer Guide for personal or group use, click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude

Break into groups of three to compose a 6-8 sentence prayer together in which you express your heart of gratitude to God for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf. You may wish to follow this form:

Adoration – What can I praise God for in light of what this passage teaches me about the resurrection?

Confession – What sin can I confess because of what this teaches me?

Thanksgiving – What can I thank God for in light of what Jesus has done for me?

Supplication – What do I need to ask of God in order to grow in light of this?