

He is Risen, He is Risen Indeed John 20:1-18

Pastor Paul

HUMC April 4, 2021

Benjamin Franklin was a colorful figure in our nation's history. Among many things, he was an author, printer, scientist, an inventor, statesman and a diplomat. In one of his lighter moments, he wrote his own epitaph or message for his tomb stone. Let me read it to you.

"The body of B. Franklin, Printer, like the cover of an old Book.

Its contents torn out, and 'stript' (stripped) of 'Letering' (lettering) and gilding

Lies here, Food for Worms, but the Work shall not be wholly lost:

For it will be as he believ'd, appear once more in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by the Author."

Mr. Franklin was a young man at the time he wrote this unusual statement, but he knew there was life after death and could base that hope on Jesus' resurrection of the dead.

My text for this morning is John 20:1-18 and may that the hope of Jesus' resurrection may increase our faith.

20 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.

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.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"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.

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

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").

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.'"

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. This is the Word of God.

The resurrection of the dead is the foundation of the gospel message, the guarantee of heaven and the cornerstone of Christianity.

One key witness in the resurrection story was Mary from the tiny seaside community of Magdala. Luke, probably met her when he did research his gospel and later wrote in 8:2 that that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her.

And if that were true, Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene was in a terrible condition before she met Jesus. We can only speculate what she was like before she met Jesus. It is likely with a demonic element in her life, she was an embarrassment to her family in her little village due to her inappropriate behavior.

It would not be a surprise that she suffered from some type depression, had suicidal tendencies and experienced some type of mental imbalance. People under such demonic control sometimes look disheveled and unkempt.

But when Jesus cast out the seven demons, she went from perhaps, a troubled, foul mouth, disturbed young woman to a kind, lover of God.

Because of Jesus, Mary was now holy in her speech and conduct. And she had the privilege to be the first to see the risen Christ and tell others "I had seen the Lord."

Scholars tell us if the apostles had made up the resurrection story, they not have included Mary, because a woman's

testimony in the first century Israel was not admissible in a court of law.

Now there is another element about the resurrection story that impresses me and that is the grave clothes.

John 20:5-7 Amplified Bible

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 laying 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 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb, first, went in too; and he saw and was convinced *and* believed.

If all of us could have been present Easter morning, we would have noticed that the grave clothes were orderly and neat. They looked as if Jesus' body had evaporated out of the burial wrappings without disturbing their place.

Several days prior, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wrapped linen strips around Jesus' body and in the process smeared some 80 pounds of ointments, aloes and spices in between the folds of the cloth. If anyone were to remove any of these burial wrappings, there would be tearing and cutting.

The whole point I want to make is that the grave clothes did not slide off Jesus' body. They just lay there, weighted down by gravity as if Jesus floated out of them.

When John noticed saw the neat, orderly arrangement of linen clothes and how the head cloth retained the shape and contour of Jesus' head had given it, he believed.

I think if I were present along with Peter and John and saw the grave clothes, I think I would have believed on the spot. But faith comes from hearing and hearing the word of God. Now there is an intellectual component that must be taken into consideration:

- The Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Zechariah and Micah that point to Christ's resurrection.
- Jesus prophesied numerous times that he would rise again.
- There was the positioning of the grave clothes.
- The post resurrection appearances in a span of six weeks where he was seen by many of his disciples.
- The miraculous ending fits a miraculous life.

The resurrection of Jesus is a pledge and promise to those who believe will be raised to life.

John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

The resurrection guarantees our future resurrection. When Jesus rose from the dead, we too will rise.

I realize there are many in society who have doubts. Is it true? Is it believable? Can it be proved? Does it matter in our day-to-day existence?

Since the beginning of Christianity, there has been an endless barrage of criticism both overt and subtle. Peter who was one of the first ones to the tomb wrote in his epistle **2 Peter 1:16 We did not follow, cleverly invented stories, but we were eye witnesses.**

Today's date on our calendar April 4, 2021 AD or CE is based on the life of Jesus. If you notice that the Christian church does not meet on Friday, Saturday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, but Sunday, the first day of the week when Jesus rose from the dead.

Faith is voluntary and no one is forced to believe. What is really curious is that after the resurrection, Jesus did not appear to Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, the Sanhedrin or his enemies, but to those who loved him.

It is the same principle today. When Jesus finally appeared to Thomas, he told him these very important words. **"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

May we as 21st Century Believers, take the words of Jesus' resurrection and commit our hearts to Christ. To make peace with our maker and invite the Lord into our heart. If you still have doubts, don't rely on the opinions of others, but do your own research.

I would like to close this message with a time of prayer and I invite you to have some quiet time with Christ. Find a place where you could go and sit and talk to God and thank him for all He has done for you as we commemorate this most important time of the year.