

April 14: John 20-21

## Chapter 20

Vs 1-18, Christ is Risen! But it takes a while for the Alleluia to come. In John's gospel, Jesus' body has already been anointed with myrrh and aloes and wrapped in linen cloth (John 19: 39) by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, so Mary does not come with other women to anoint Jesus' body for burial (as in the other gospels), rather she comes to the tomb to pay her respects and to grieve, as was the custom. When she sees that the stone had been removed from the tomb (no easy task), she assumes the grave has been robbed. Peter and the Disciple whom Jesus Loved run to the tomb to see if what she said was true, the DL arrives first –perhaps indicating that Peter is in a subordinate position right now because of his denial of Jesus. They see the grave clothes in the tomb, with the linen head covering folded up by itself in the corner. Vs. 8 “he saw and believed” simply indicates that he believes what Mary had said about Jesus being taken out of the tomb, it does not imply that he believed Jesus was raised. This is confirmed by the following verse, customary for the disciples' response to Jesus' words and work “they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” These two seem to think it's all over, so they go home!

Mary now looks into the tomb and there are two angels in the tomb (where a moment ago there hadn't been), she is totally unphased. This may be the only time in the Bible where not only do the angels not have to say “be not afraid” but also, where they don't actually get to say what they had come to say! They simply ask her why she's weeping, for of all the days in the history of the earth this is a day for rejoicing! She is weeping because she does not know where the dead body of Jesus is (what she was expecting to find in the tomb)... at this moment, she turns around to see the living body of Jesus!!! But she doesn't recognize him. She assumes him to be the gardener. Why? Well, they were in a garden, who else would be there that early in the morning? Perhaps the sun was in her eyes and she couldn't see clearly.... Also, since the grave clothes were left in the grave, Jesus would have been naked and in need of clothes to walk around in, perhaps he found the ground's keeper's shed nearby, with an extra set of clothes! Mary thinks/hopes that maybe this person knows where she can find the dead body of Jesus. When Jesus calls her by name, she finally recognizes his living, resurrected body right in front of her! Because Jesus says “Do not hold onto me” we can assume that Mary immediately reaches out to embrace him, but Jesus only has a limited amount of time to roam the earth before he ascends, he sends Mary off on the most important mission, to announce the resurrection to all the other disciples!

Vs. 19-31, Where was Jesus all day? The scene goes from dawn to dusk. We're not supposed to mash gospels together, but perhaps he spent the day on the road to Emmaus. It seems that Mary's announcement of the resurrection has fallen on deaf ears, for the disciples are all (except for Thomas) sheltered in place, with the doors locked, fearing that they'll meet the same fate as Jesus. Christ manifested in their midst –no locked door could keep him out- and gave them the message they needed most “Peace be with you.” He then showed them his fleshy wounds, so that they would believe it was really, physically him and not just a ghost. Jesus then gives them their mission, “Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, so I send you.... To forgive sins.” From the Greek, Jesus is urging them to forgive sins, not retain sins. Christ breathes his spirit –the Holy Spirit- the Advocate- The Comforter- out upon them. The Holy Spirit given to the Church at Pentecost, and at each Baptism since Pentecost, is the Spirit of our Risen Jesus Christ! Christ himself empowers us to carry out his mission.

Thomas was not in the room with everyone else, and he refused to believe what they were saying unless he saw the evidence with his own eyes. What an awful week he must have had! But Christ came back a week later to give Thomas what he thought he needed. Now the doors were not

locked, only shut, and after Jesus greets them with his peace, he shows Thomas his wounds and urges him to believe. Thomas doesn't need to thrust his hand in his side and palms as he thought he did, he sees Christ and confesses him as Lord and God (a stronger reaction of faith than the other disciples had who merely rejoiced). Jesus says that WE are blessed, for we have not seen and yet have come to believe. And yet, he still came back for Thomas.... Which means that even when we need a little extra help to believe, Christ meets us and gives us what we need in time. Vs. 30-31 makes up the original ending of John's gospel, tying up some important themes. Jesus did so many amazing signs that they couldn't possibly all be contained within a book, what is written in the gospel is written for the purpose of nurturing the faith of those who read it to come to understand Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, which leads to LIFE (abundant life) through this trust in him.

## Chapter 21

This is believed to be an appendix, added on later by followers to connect Jesus' resurrection appearances in Jerusalem (John & Luke) with the resurrection appearances in Galilee (in Matthew & Mark). This also provides a reconciliation and reinstatement to leadership for Peter.

In spite of the mission they'd received from Jesus in Jerusalem, it seems like these disciples have returned to the life they knew before Jesus (fishing in the sea of Galilee). Peter seems to lead this initiative, and the others follow him. They fish all night (the normal time for fishing) and catch nothing. Just as they were returning to shore, Christ called to them from the beach and performed one final miracle of abundance for his disciples (remember the water to wine, the feeding of the 5000, the healing of the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus). Christ tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat, and they catch so many fish they couldn't haul the net in! We're told they catch 153 large fish, that's a mysteriously specific number. According to historical record, 153 were the number of different species of fish known to live in the sea of Galilee at the time of Jesus, so assumingly this specific number is about inclusion of every kind of fish! The disciples are tasked with "catching" everyone with the gospel. Christ is recognized by the disciple whom Jesus loved through this sign of abundant life, and when he announces that it is the Lord, Peter (who had probably been wearing only a loin cloth) gets dressed and jumps into the sea to make it to the beach faster than the boat. The breakfast on the beach is very Eucharistic imagery. Jesus feeds them, just as he last fed them on the night he was betrayed. He invites them to add their fish to his fish on the fire, to offer what they have with what Jesus has.

After breakfast, Jesus reconciles Peter to his role of leadership. He asks him 3 times if he loves him to give him a chance to take back his 3 denials. This is a painful process for Peter, to face what he was so ashamed he'd done, but a necessary part of healing for Peter and for his relationship with Jesus. Jesus gives Peter the special mission of feeding & tending his sheep (Jesus is still the good shepherd, Peter and all church leaders who follow in his lineage are but Christ's hired hands). Christ foreshadows Peter's martyrdom and says "follow me" just as he had when he first called this disciple into his flock. Even having shared this powerful, intimate moment with Jesus, Peter is still focused on what other people will get compared to him. He and the disciple whom Jesus loved seemed to have shared a rivalry for Jesus' love and attention. Peter asks Jesus what fate awaits the beloved disciple, and Jesus essentially tells him to mind his own business. The identity of the beloved disciple is unknown, though Irenaeus (in 180CE) associated him with John Zebedee.... Ironically, John is the only one of the 11 remaining apostles who didn't die as a martyr, but of old age.