

Peace Be with You

Abide Series, March 30 & 31, 2024

Easter Weekend | John 20:19-23

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What happened? **The tomb was empty.**

Jesus' tomb was empty, which led to confusion.

Jesus was crucified on a Friday. The Romans nailed his hands and feet to a cross and left him to die. Jesus died quickly. Surprised, a soldier pierced Jesus' side to be sure he was dead.

Followers of Jesus came and took his body down and hurriedly placed it in a tomb.

On Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. She found it open.

Mary ran back to Jerusalem and grabbed two of Jesus' disciples.

Together, they came to the tomb. One by one, they went into the tomb. Jesus was gone.

The disciples were not sure what had happened. They went back to Jerusalem with the news that the tomb was empty. They were so confused.

Jesus appeared to several people over time, which sparked hope!

After the disciples left, Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb. Jesus appeared to her, but she didn't recognize him at first. Then he called her by name, and she knew it was him.

That afternoon, two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jesus appeared and walked with them, but they didn't recognize him either. Over dinner, they recognized Jesus, and he disappeared.

Sometime in the afternoon, Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter as well.

Hope began to spread. Apparently, Jesus was alive, but everyone was still so confused.

What had happened? What did it mean?

This was no mere resuscitation.

In May of 1999, a Norwegian radiologist named Anna was skiing in the mountains with friends.

She fell, slid downhill, and went head-first through the ice into a frozen stream. Her friends tried to pull her out, but she was stuck. Upside down. Pulled by the current.

She found a pocket of air and was able to breathe for a while.

After 40 minutes, she stopped moving. Forty minutes later, rescuers arrived.

Her heart had stopped beating. She wasn't breathing. Friends started CPR while rescuers airlifted her to the nearest hospital.

Two-and-a-half hours after the accident she made it to the hospital, and her core temperature was in the mid-fifties. No signs of life. But the cold might have saved her life.

The team refused to give up hope.

They hooked Anna to a heart-lung machine and began oxygenating and heating her blood.

Her temperature began to rise, and the next day her heart began beating on its own again.

Eventually, she made a full recovery. Amazing!¹

However, what happened to Anna doesn't help us to understand what happened to Jesus.

Anna was resuscitated. She was hurt, her body shut down, and doctors were able to restart her body. That was a resuscitation.

That's not what happened to Jesus. Jesus died and was in the tomb for three days.

We understand Anna's experience, but that's not what happened to Jesus.

What really happened? **Jesus was resurrected.**

Jesus was still the same in many ways.

Jesus appeared to his disciples and showed them the wounds in his hands and in his side.

He was confirming for them that he was really the same Jesus they had known before.

He was also confirming for them that he had indeed been crucified.

And we are seeing that Jesus wasn't a ghost or only a spirit. He was still flesh and blood.

However, Jesus was now different in some important ways.

Good friends did not recognize him at first.

And our Scripture reading for today points out that on the evening of the Resurrection, the disciples were gathered back in the Upper Room with the doors locked.

Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them.

Jesus did not come to the door, knock, have the door opened, and walk through. Instead, Jesus just appeared in the room among them. That's different.

Jesus was resurrected.

To be resurrected is different from being resuscitated.

To be resuscitated is to be given your old life back, but you will still die one day.

Jesus was resurrected. He is the same in many ways, but he is also different in some ways.

The Resurrected Christ is glorified, he is given a new body that is fully physical but also fully spiritual and eternal.

No wonder even his close friends had a difficult time recognizing him at first!

It's like the difference between an acorn and an oak tree.

Jesus' first body, his natural body, was like the acorn.

If an acorn goes into the ground, it seems to die. But then it becomes an oak tree.

Jesus' first body, his natural body died and was buried.

But then he was resurrected and had a glorified, spiritual, eternal body.

That's our hope!

¹ <https://www.sciencealert.com/this-woman-survived-the-lowest-body-temperature-ever-recorded>

We know that this life is going to end someday.

Our hope is that, like Jesus, we too will be resurrected.

Our natural bodies will be transformed. We will be given spiritual bodies that are glorified, perfect, and suited for eternity.

It happened to Jesus, and he promises that it will happen to all of us who belong to him.

Why does it matter? **Jesus proclaims peace.**

Jesus calmed the fears of the disciples.

When Jesus appeared among his disciples, the first thing he said to them was, "Peace."

The disciples were huddled in the Upper Room, afraid that the people who had arrested Jesus would arrest them.

Jesus proclaimed "Peace" to them.

Jesus didn't just bring a peace that isn't really peace.

I've seen the peace that isn't really peace in married couples in restaurants.

You notice a couple sitting at a table silently.

They spend time looking at the menu in silence. Then the server comes, and they order.

They wait for their food in silence. They eat in silence, pay in silence, and leave in silence.

Of course, there is the occasional couple for whom eating in silence is a pure joy.

But for many couples eating in silence, it's because there are no words to say.

They aren't yelling. Still, there isn't peace. That's peace and quiet.

Jesus doesn't bring peace and quiet. He brings something so much more.

Jesus brought peace in the fullest sense!

Jesus was proclaiming to his disciples that there was now peace between them and God!

Since the time when the first human beings sinned, we have been in rebellion against God.

But now, Jesus is saying that there can be peace between us and God. Our relationship with God can be right, and we can be right before God.

When we are right with God, we can be right with one another and with the world around us.

That's peace. That's real peace. When Jesus says, "Peace be with you," that's what he means.

Jesus did it! He did what no human could do alone.

Jesus died on the cross and paid the price that we could never pay for our sin.

Then Jesus rose victorious from the grave. Jesus beat death! Jesus' resurrection proved that he had already beaten sin, and his resurrection means that we do indeed get eternal life!

"Peace be with you." Jesus proclaims that the cross and the empty tomb worked.

"Peace be with you." Jesus proclaims that he did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Jesus did it! "Peace be with you."

What's next? **Jesus offers us new life and new purpose.**

What happened Easter evening is almost like an episode from the BBC's hit show, *The Repair Shop*.

The show centers on cherished antiques that have been damaged or worn.

People bring them to expert restorers who work to repair and restore all sorts of heirlooms.

One episode was particularly touching. A couple brought in a teddy bear named "Fred." The couple gave Fred to their daughter when she was one year old.

Fifty years later, after being played with a lot, Fred was threadbare and missing an ear.

Now the family wanted to prepare Fred for a new generation.

The restorers had to replace Fred's stuffing. They gave him a good cleaning, made a new ear for him, stitched up some holes, and put back fur in some of the places it had worn away.

Here's Fred with his newest child.

You could think of us before Christ as being a little bit like Fred—worn and a little forlorn.

What Jesus did for his disciples on the evening of the resurrection is a little bit like what they did for Fred Bear. He gave them new life and a new purpose.

Jesus breathed on his disciples and gave them new life.

If you've studied the Bible, you've seen this kind of thing before.

Way back in the book of Genesis when God created the first man, he shaped dirt into the shape he wanted. Then he breathed the breath of life into him, and the lump became a living being! (See Genesis 2:7.)

And the prophet Ezekiel talks about the way that the LORD can breathe on dry bones and give them new life. (See Ezekiel 37:5, 14.)

Jesus breathed on his disciples and gave them new life.

Jesus also gave them a new purpose.

Jesus told his disciples that he was sending them out.

They had witnessed everything they needed to see. They had been with Jesus throughout his ministry, they had heard his teachings, they had watched him work, they had seen him crucified, and now they had seen him resurrected from the dead.

Jesus said that he was sending them out, just as his Father had sent him.

That means that his disciples were ready to do the same work Jesus had done and carry on his mission to save people and build the Kingdom of God.

Jesus gave them his Holy Spirit.

Repeatedly, Jesus promised that he would do so. After he died and rose again, he and his Father would send the Holy Spirit to Jesus' disciples.

The Holy Spirit would do so many things. Among other things, God the Holy Spirit would give Jesus' disciples (all of them) new life and new purpose. That's what started right here.

Jesus makes the same offer to you.

The things Jesus did for his disciples on the first Easter are the things he offers to you today.

Jesus offers you peace, rightness with God, with one another, and all around.

Jesus offers you new life. That new life comes from forgiveness, it includes a whole new relationship with God, it changes everything, and it never stops growing inside of you.

Jesus offers you a new purpose. Jesus offers to send you out on his mission, to do his work.

Jesus offers you his Holy Spirit, who makes everything else possible. And God's Holy Spirit at work inside of us means that God is always, always, always with us.

Jesus offers you resurrection. It happened to him. If you are a follower of his, it will happen to you someday.

What will you do? Say "yes" to Jesus' offer.