

## Jesus Lives

[Announce Text] Please Open your Bibles to John chapter 20.

[Scripture Introduction] Good morning, my name is Brett Sweet and I'm one of the pastors here at Grace Christian Fellowship where we exist to glorify God through gospel-centered worship, evangelism, discipleship, and community.

[Prayer for illumination] Please pray with me...

[Illustration] I've heard tragic stories of relationships that have been so broken that one person has said to another these painful words, "You're dead to me!" When people say that from a place of pain they are stating that they refuse to have their lives impacted any longer by the person who has wounded them. They will not call that person. They will not talk to that person. They will live like the living person is dead. They believe doing so will protect themselves from further harm. They believe their lives will be easier. They live like others are dead. They believe they can live life on their own terms. This has happened to some of you and this is likely in the future for some of you.

Such a statement is so shocking because we know that the fact is that living people should have an impact on how we live. The person who cut you off on the way here, the child is excited for Easter eggs, the people need you to pick things up at the store when this is over impact you because they are alive. If you lived like they were dead your life would be different.

Many people, even those who call themselves Christians, live their lives as if Jesus is dead to them. He has no impact on the way they live. They lack joy. They live without hope. They feel guilty. When they live as if they believe Jesus is dead they functionally live like all that is left for them is death. But John 20 was written to help us. There is good news that can be summarized simply as this:

### **[Proposition] Believe and Live**

Believe and Live. If Jesus is dead to you, then all you will get is death. But if you believe you get life. To give us help as we seek to believe and live, we'll relive the morning of the Resurrection and look at three things connected to believing. We should believe because Jesus' body was gone, We should believe because the Risen Jesus was seen, and we should believe because believing births life.

## **[Main Point 1] Believe because Jesus' body was gone**

The expert executioners of the Roman army have expertly and torturously killed Jesus. He's not just dead to those who don't want to see Him, He's objectively dead. No heart activity, no lung function, no brainwaves. Dead. And He's been that way for approximately 36 hours. And He's been wrapped in grave cloths and buried in a stone tomb. But we're to believe Jesus is alive because Jesus' body was gone. We know Jesus' body was gone because

[Subpoint 1] Jesus' tomb was empty

Look with me at vv. 1-3-

*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.*

Mary Magdalene knew where Jesus was buried but now she finds the tomb empty. So she tells two of Jesus' closest friends Peter and John who identifies himself as the "the disciple whom Jesus loved." They go to confirm the tomb was empty and see things they way she described.

Jesus' body was gone! We know because Jesus' tomb was empty. But there is another reason to believe because Jesus' body was gone.

[Subpoint 2] Jesus' grave cloths were there

Notice vv. 4-8

*Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;*

This is Jesus' tomb. And the grave cloths were there. They probably recognized specific aspects of the cloths that were remembered from when Jesus' burial was witnessed. Jesus' body was gone. But the grave cloths were there. Dead people need grave cloths but not living people. Believe that Jesus is alive because the grave cloths were where they belonged- in a grave.

But there's another reason to believe that's tied to Jesus missing body.

[Subpoint 3] The disappearance of Jesus' body was unexpected

Read v. 2 and then vv. 9-10 with me-

*So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."*

*...for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.*

Neither Mary nor the disciples expected Jesus' body to be gone. They didn't understand the Scriptures in the Psalms that talked about Jesus' body not seeing corruption. Jesus' body was gone but it was so unexpected, that the only theory was that someone had moved the body. Yet it seems as if the disciples are still living as if Jesus is dead to them. They just went about their business. They went home. They didn't behave as if they checked off something that the knew was on Jesus to-do list. They did not expect Jesus body to disappear.

John 20 tells us to believe and live. We have reason to believe because Jesus' body was gone. Now let's notice more reasons to believe.

## **[Main Point 2] Believe because the Risen Jesus was seen**

So far in the minds of these three people, there is a mystery. Jesus' body is gone. But they don't really know that Jesus is alive. He still seems to be, generally speaking, dead to them. But the Risen Jesus was seen. Notice first that

[Subpoint 1] Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene

We live in a time where we often rightly shout "Believe all women!" But that wasn't the case in John's time. Women weren't even really allowed to function as

witnesses. But John cares about the truth, not the cultural conventions of the day. We see that in vv. 11-18 while John and Peter ran back to their homes.

*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announce to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"- and that he had said these things to her.*

Mary Magdalene saw Jesus. She wasn't expecting to, but there He was. He spoke her name that very special way that she recognized. Something happened in her heart. She looked again, more carefully, and she saw Jesus. The Risen Jesus. Whatever or whomever she was seeking immediately changed. Like when you find that toy or that treasure when you are supposed to be cleaning your room. And the world stops for a moment. You're forced to stare at what's in front of you. The Risen Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene. This should be enough for us to believe.

But it is always helpful to belief to have more witnesses. If Jesus really is alive, it would help us if others could confirm Mary's claims right. The Risen Jesus was seen. Now notice

[Subpoint 2] Jesus was seen by the Disciples

Let's read vv. 19-23 now

*On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them*

*his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."*

On that first day of the week. That Sunday. That Resurrection Sunday, the disciples were meeting but they still seemed to living as if Jesus was dead and dead to them. They didn't know death had been defeated. They were afraid of the Jewish leaders. But then someone was seen by the Disciples- the Risen Jesus was seen. We can't go into the details of how Jesus' real, physical body made it past a locked door other than to say that the Resurrection body, while physical like ours, must have different capabilities. And in that locked room someone who was dead was now seen to be alive. And I remind you again: they didn't expect it. Verse 9 told us that they didn't understand the Scriptures. But whether you expect it or not. Whether you want it or not. Reality imposes itself upon us. Here it is the reality that Jesus is alive.

Believe and Live this morning! Jesus' tomb was empty. Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene and the disciples. But the Risen Jesus was seen by one more person of note in this historical account:

[Subpoint 3] Jesus was seen by a skeptic

The great philosopher and skeptic David Hume said you must never believe the story about something, such as the resurrection, unless you yourself had experienced it or witnessed it. Thomas was someone who lived like Hume would want. As a good skeptic but let's notice now what happens to this skeptic in vv. 24-29

*Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into this side, I will never believe."*

*Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my*

*hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Thomas was a good skeptic. Jesus was dead to Thomas, no matter what his friends said. But then Jesus pressed his skepticism further than it could handle. Jesus was seen by Thomas the skeptic. He saw Jesus physical body, scars and all. Thomas was allowed to touch him. And it changed Thomas. His response was to worship Jesus. To call Jesus his Lord and his God. And Jesus says something that challenges those who are skeptics who haven't seen Jesus. He calls us to believe even when we haven't seen.

[Apologetic] I mentioned David Hume and how he said you shouldn't believe someone's claims unless you, yourself witnessed things. But think about that for a moment. Life immediately becomes impossible to live. Even though everyone else says that there's gasoline in those pumps, should you really put it in your car? Even though scientists have equations for the force of gravity, you didn't discover them- shouldn't you start at the beginning and find out if those equations are true? But that would mean taking the word of scientists on how to do reliable experiments and how to take measurements. You see, Hume was trying to be a consistent skeptic. He was originally praised by scientists but then they realized he was destroying science and life. To live like a skeptic would logically mean a perpetual stone age where everyone would literally have to reinvent the wheel. Soon or later, we have to believe the testimony of others. We have to believe even when we haven't seen.

And Jesus says that that's what He wants and expects. People to believe who haven't seen Him. People who believe because they've heard of Him from others and heard from Him in the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus says that those who believe based on good evidence, the empty tomb, and the fact that the Risen Jesus was seen- they are blessed. And blessed means often means "happy." We live in a country where we were founded on a pursuit of happiness. And Jesus says that your pursuit of happiness is on the right track when you believe in Him. When you believe that He defeated sin at the cross and that He rose from the grave.

Believe and live. Believe because Jesus' body was gone. Believe because the Risen Jesus was seen, and now let's notice something amazing:

### **[Main Point 3] Believing Births Life**

Look with me at vv. 30-31

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John says that the purpose of reading this account is that you believe. But that belief is like a pregnant mother. That belief is carrying something around with it. Life. So when you believe something is naturally and supernaturally born from it. New life. Life that comes from knowing Jesus as He really is. As the promised Messiah. As the Eternal Son of God. As the One who purchased new life for His people.

This is a joyful wonderful true story. The most wonderful true story of all. The One who could defeat death because He has always had life going back into eternity will be the source of new life to those who believe. But that carries with it a serious issue too. If you could get this life somewhere else, then John wouldn't have written this. We wouldn't be told to believe and live. We'd be told we're already alive. Believe and live. The opposite must therefore be true. Don't believe and die. And that's what we see consistently across the Bible. Our sin has been rebellion against God. Our sin has been refusing to trust that God is good and that He knows what's best. It means we deserve to be punished with the pure punishment and wrath of God. It means a sort of painful death that never ends. And that's why Jesus was dead before He was raised. That's why Good Friday came before Resurrection Sunday. Jesus died our death on the Cross in our place as our substitute. But life comes when you believe. Count the cost of believing. When Thomas called Jesus his Lord, it meant that Jesus was His Master. Jesus owned everything about Thomas' future life. And it was Thomas belief and confession that led to his death. Following Jesus will be costly and may be dangerous. But it also means happiness. So it's worth it. Believe and Live.

[Conclusion] In 1908 Wilbur Wright was called by some *le bluffeur*- the "bluffer" for his claims that he and his brother had flown numerous times in North Carolina

and their home state of Ohio. But on an afternoon on a summer day in Le Mans, France he wheeled out his airplane after having to totally rebuild it. It had been severely damaged by careless French customs agents. He meticulously checked the plane for the evidence that everything was in place and secure while numerous spectators watched from the bleachers around a racetrack. He checked the runway with the care of someone whose life depended on it. And as dusk approached at 6:30pm before he made one last check of his plane he calmly said to the men around him, "Gentlemen, I'm going to fly." And he did. And the world has not been the same. He knew from the evidence and the way the invisible forces of physics work that his plane be compelled to lift off and soar.

The same thing happens with us. We look at this evidence and then the Holy Spirit asserts an invisible force at work in our hearts. The invisible force that truly raised Jesus from dead compels us to believe. We see the evidence and we know Jesus is no longer dead. And we know He is not dead to us. When you do your world will not be the same. You find that when you believe you have also begun to live. You'll be willing to face ridicule and name-calling. You'll be willing to take risks because you know even death can't stop the One who saved you. He lives today. Because He lives, we live too. Believe and live.