

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THREE APPEARANCES OF THE RESURRECTED LORD”

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: March 31, 2024

SPEAKER: Brian/Wil

SERIES: Holy Week

PASSAGE: John 20:11-29

Family Dinner Table

Eucatastrophe

The greatest turn from sorrow to joy the world has ever witnessed was the resurrection of Christ—a “*eucatastrophe*,” as English author and academic J.R.R. Tolkien called it. Tolkien coined the term “*eucatastrophe*” to describe a good turn of events in a story. In an essay he wrote in 1938, he said: “*The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous ‘turn’, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It is the mark of a good fairy-story, of the higher or more complete kind, that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man that hears it, when the ‘turn’ comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality.*” The resurrection of Jesus was a *eucatastrophe* in Tolkien’s fullest sense of the term. According to Tolkien, “*The resurrection is the greatest ‘eucatastrophe’ possible in the greatest Fairy Story—and produces that essential emotion: Christian joy which produces tears because it is qualitatively so like sorrow, because it comes from those places where Joy and Sorrow are at one, reconciled.*”⁴

- Read Psalm 22. Describe David’s prediction of the *eucatastrophe* of the cross more than 1,000 years before.

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS
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Predictions are a part of everyday life. Each year March Madness fans try to predict the perfect NCAA bracket only to have their hopes crushed in the opening round of play. But not so with Jesus’ predictions. On Palm Sunday we read in Luke 19:28-40 that Jesus predicted the disciples would find a bridled colt in a nearby town for his triumphal entry, and it happened. In Luke 18:31-34, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, and it happened—the greatest prediction come true in all of history. And in John 20:11-29, the **three appearances of the resurrected Lord** lead us to believe anew, even as he admonishes his disciples, “*Do not disbelieve, but believe*” (v. 27)!

The risen Lord Jesus leads us from grief to comfort. (vv. 11-18)

As the passage opens, we find Mary grieving. She believes someone has taken the body of Christ, and she is weeping. But when Jesus appears and speaks her name, there is instant recognition, “*Rabboni!*” (v. 16). In that moment of hearing his voice, her sorrow turns to joy as she embraces him. Francis Weller, author of *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: The Sacred Work of Grief* notes that “*It is the broken heart, the heart that knows sorrow that is also capable of genuine love.*”¹

- Read John 10:1-18. Discuss how Jesus’ discourse on *The Good Shepherd* points to his death and the events surrounding his resurrection.
- Read John 6:44. What are the parallels of Mary not recognizing Jesus until he called to her and Jesus’ teaching on God’s effectual calling?

The risen Lord Jesus leads us from fear to commission. (vv. 19-23)

In verse 17, Mary is given a mission by Jesus to deliver a message to his disciples. Later, as the disciples huddle in fear behind locked doors, Jesus appears to them, commissioning them to spread the good news of reconciliation with God. Biblical scholar Frederick Dale Bruner summarizes, “*In the Gospels, when one meets Jesus one is given a mission. The Christian faith is not just ‘Jesus and me.’ It is also Jesus and mission, Jesus and other people.*”²

- Read Romans 8:15-17. What kind of new relationship does Paul describe for those who believe?
- Twice Jesus says to his disciples as he enters the locked room, “Peace be with you.” Recall from our study last week of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he rode a donkey which symbolized “peace,” and the crowds exclaimed, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:28-40). Read Romans 5:1-11. How do we obtain peace with God, and who is the only source of that peace? (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7)

The risen Lord Jesus leads us from doubt to conviction. (vv. 24-29)

Theologian Frederick Dale Bruner believes that Thomas gets a bad wrap for being forever immortalized as “*Doubting Thomas.*” He explains that we should all have a bit of sympathy, for to hear such an incredible testimony that Christ had risen was a “*first.*” According to Bruner, “*Thomas’ requirement of tactile proof serves us because it is exactly what we ourselves deeply crave. ‘Did this really happen?’ Thomas is every generation’s ‘modern man,’ sincere inquirer, and honest seeker. The Gospel is giving all such people, in Thomas’ person and through his present insistence, some space, time, and respect.*”³ But once Thomas believes, his is the most powerful Christological confession in all of Scripture, “*My Lord and my God!*” (v. 28).

- Thinking back on your own experience, what was the most difficult thing for you to believe about Jesus or the Bible? How did Jesus meet you in your doubt and his Spirit give you eyes to see?

¹Weller, Francis. *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: The Sacred Work of Grief*. March 26, 2024. <https://www.francisweller.net/the-wild-edge-of-sorrow-the-sacred-work-of-grief.html>

²⁻³Bruner, Frederick Dale. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2012, Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans Publishing. 1153, 1185

⁴Tolkien, J.R.R. edited by Carpenter, Humphrey and Tolkien, Christopher. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: Letter 89*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. NY New York. 1981. 100-101