

Small Group Questions

“Not Quite Empty”

John 20:1-10

Previous message summary: The Apostle John tells his readers about the death and burial of Jesus. In his account, he includes details that the other Gospel writers do not mention. Only John mentions that the Jewish religious leaders ask Pilate to break the legs of the crucified victims in order to speed death along. The soldiers are ordered to break the legs, but when they come to Jesus, they realize that he is already dead, so they don't break his legs. This is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. John is also the only Gospel writer to mention that Jesus' side is pierced. In order to ensure that Jesus was really dead, one of the soldiers takes his spear and pierces Jesus' side and blood and water flow out. This is also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. In addition to Jesus' legs not being broken, and his side being pierced, John also wants his readers to know that Jesus was buried by two “secret disciples” who by their actions are secret disciples no more. This burial also fulfills Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

What we learned: John's point is that Jesus is dead and that he is the promised Messiah who fulfills Old Testament prophecy precisely. The way that Jesus dies cannot be explained by coincidence or chance. John wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and the crucifixion is God's plan to save the world.

Introduction

1. What does a person need to know in order to believe in Jesus and turn to him for salvation?
 - a. What did you understand about Jesus when you first believed in him?
 - b. What was the thing, or who was the person, that started you on the road to believing in Jesus?

- c. Has your understanding of who Jesus is and what it means to follow him changed since you initially believed in Jesus? In what way has your faith changed or grown?

Discussion Questions

Read John 20:1-10

2. What day of the week did Mary go back to the tomb where Jesus' body was placed? Why did Mary, and the others, wait until Sunday to visit the tomb?
 - a. Why is it important for John, and the other Gospel writers, to mention that it was the first day of the week? Read Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2; & Matt. 28:1.
 - b. Why is the first day of the week important to Christians today and to Christians down through history?
3. Who accompanied Mary to the tomb that morning? Read Luke 24:10; Mark 16:1; & Matt. 28:1. Why does John only record that Mary Magdalene was at the tomb that first morning?
 - a. What were Mary and the other women going to the tomb to do? Why was it important for them to do this?
 - b. If you were a friend of Jesus in the first century, would you have wanted to return to the tomb to honor Jesus? What can you do today to honor Jesus?
4. What does Mary notice about the tomb when she arrives early that first morning? What is significant about what has happened to the stone that sealed the tomb?
 - a. How does Mary react to seeing the tomb? Who does she immediately find to tell about the tomb?
 - b. What does Mary tell these disciples about the tomb?

- c. Does Mary suspect that Jesus has been resurrected at this point? What is her logical conclusion about what has happened?
5. What do the disciples do when they learn that Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb? Who wins the footrace to the tomb? Why do you think John tells us the outcome of the footrace?
 - a. How have Peter and John been contrasted throughout the Gospel of John? Read John 13:23-24; 18:15-16; 21:7-8.
 - b. What does the first disciple do when he arrives at the tomb? What does he "see"?
 - c. Why does this disciple not go into the tomb?
 6. What happens when the other disciple arrives at the tomb? Does he go inside the tomb? Why?
 - a. What does this second disciple "see" when he goes into the tomb?
 - b. What is unusual about the linen cloths that are found inside the tomb? What is significant about the face cloth and where it is found?
 - c. If someone were to rob the tomb, what would be the items of value that they would take?
 - d. If the disciples were to steal the body, would they have unwrapped it?
 7. When the first disciple does decide to go into the tomb, what does he "see" and what happens as a result of what he sees? Does he have everything completely figured out at this point? Read John 20:9.
 - a. What does the Apostle John want readers to know about Jesus as a result of looking at the eyewitness accounts detailed in this passage?
 - b. How does the fact that the tomb was not quite empty on that first Easter morning confirm that Jesus is indeed risen? What would you conclude about Jesus if you were there with Mary, John and Peter that first Easter morning?

8. How does the resurrection of Jesus explain the rapid growth of the early church in the book of Acts? Read Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; & 6:1.

Challenge: John wants us to know that Jesus really did die and he really did rise back to life. The stone was rolled away not for Jesus' benefit (he could have walked through the stone) but for the benefit of those first witnesses so they could see into the tomb. The grave cloths and spices that were left behind are also left for the benefit of those first witnesses to confirm that the empty tomb was not robbed and the body was not stolen. The evidence all points to the reality that Jesus has defeated the grave and indeed has been resurrected to life!

Action: This week, I will be like Mary and I will tell someone about the "not quite empty" tomb. I will invite someone to investigate the evidence of the resurrection for themselves by attending one of ECC's Easter services.

Next Steps:

- I need to examine further the evidence for the Resurrection.
- I am so thankful for the overwhelming evidence of the Resurrection.
- I will live my life with the hope and assurance that comes from the Resurrection.
- I will invite others to come and experience the evidence of the Resurrection.