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**SERMON TITLE: Seeing is Believing!**  
**SCRIPTURE: John 20:1-18**  
**DATE: April 21, 2019 EASTER**  
*Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

Read John 20:1-10.

Imagine your own feelings at experiencing what Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John experienced—the death, the burial, the silence on Saturday.

Death is so final. We so miss the person who is gone. We experience finality in other losses, too. Often loss is blinding. When something difficult happens, it affects us. Yet when it comes to Jesus, even in his death, these first followers of Jesus had hope.

Even though they did not understand this unexpected turn of events, they still went out to the tomb. So with Jesus even now, there's just something that draws us to hope, even when we cannot see it.

A couple of days had passed when something inside drove the disciples and the women to *do something*, so some of them went out to Jesus' tomb.

Mary went first. She saw that the stone was removed, the body gone.

Do you ever make assumptions about the way things are by the evidence you see? Mary assumed bad news. She didn't investigate—it was just bad news.

Once I had a roommate and she moved out and one of my prized possessions was missing. I thought she had taken it. I assumed the worst—but later I found it, where it never should have been.

Or you might think a person gave you a bad look and then something negative happened at work and you think there was a connection; that person had said something to someone that got you in trouble. Later you learn it was not the case. You made a false assumption.

So Mary Magdalene took off, thinking “they,” someone who had bad intentions toward Jesus, had stolen the body. “They,” the powers that be, were still winning.

She assumed by what she saw that not only had it gone bad for Jesus—it was going from bad to worse. The body was stolen, and he was never ever to be remembered again. This was Mary thinking all these negative things. She was filled with

sadness. Mary, who had sat at Jesus' feet listening to his words, couldn't overcome what she had seen.

The two guys were searching too, and they just needed a reason to go out there, even if they were looking for a dead body. So they looked in the tomb and they saw stuff. Mary went with them a second time and she saw stuff, like the linens and head piece and the heavy stone moved, and no *body*.

This was all supernatural, not normal; not what you expect. They could “see” the stuff, but not understand what it meant that “*no body was there*.” So the two men returned to their homes. But Mary stuck around.

Let's read what happened. READ John 20:11-13

Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. “Dear woman, why are you crying?” the angels asked her. “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have put him.”

Doesn't that seem just a little odd? If you saw two angels in white robes would you be so oblivious? Did people just see angels all the time back then? Was this a natural occurrence in A.D. 33 such that you would have a casual conversation with them?

Do you get on a roll with thinking things are a certain way—in this case, going wrong, and get stuck regardless of the evidence?

We heard how the men had come into the tomb and had seen “the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings” (v. 6-7). That was a clue. First of all, thieves do not fold up head wrappings when they steal a body. In fact, they probably would have kept all the wrappings on so as not to touch a dead body. So something else is going on. And the other interesting thing is that Jesus often gives clues of positive information:

- “Look in the first fish's mouth you catch and you will find a coin. Go pay our taxes” (Mt 17:27).
- Jesus said, “Go into the village . . . you will find tied there a colt . . . untie it and bring it. If anyone says, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” They . . . found a colt tied near a door. . . . As they were untying it,

some of the bystanders said, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it" (Mk 11:2-6).

- He was teaching his disciples, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again" (Mk 9:31).
- "He's going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. This is my message to you" (Mt 28:7).

Jesus gives clues to help us. This is just like the Father. Remember, he told Elijah that a famine was coming and to not worry, he would be taken care of:

- "Go to the Wadi Cherith . . . I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the LORD . . . The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and the evening; and he drank from the wadi" (1 Kgs 17:3-6).
- Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Go now to Zarephath . . . and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." He went and asked the woman for bread. She was afraid for she had little. But he assured her the Lord said her meal and oil will not fail until the famine is passed. It was just as the Lord told Elijah. (1 Kgs 17:8-16)

These seem like unlikely stories, but when God is involved, you can expect extraordinary things.

Have you ever had a real problem and someone leaves groceries on your doorstep? Or you are short of funds and someone left an envelope on your counter with \$200? Or you don't know where to turn and a friend inadvertently says just the right words to lift you up. Or you need a job and someone says contact this business and you get a job? All those things have happened to me.

Perhaps the folded head napkin sent the message, "I was not stolen. I awoke from the dead! I removed the head cloth myself." Jesus neatly laid it aside so he could see to stand up and UNWRAP the grave clothes!

[Mary] turned to leave the tomb and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." (Jn 20:14-15)

She was paralyzed by the tragedy. Have you been there? Have you experienced something bad that prevents you from seeing Jesus today? Have you been so disappointed that it colors your ability to have faith? She was blinded to her only hope! Jesus' presence and promises!

- If you follow me you will know the truth and the truth will set you free! (Jn 8:32)

- With me you will have life and have it more abundantly. (Jn 10:10)
- I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. (10:14)
- Why do you worry about what you will eat or drink or wear? Your Father knows you need all these things. (Mt 6:25ff)
- After three days I will rise again. (Mt 27:63)

Do you struggle with the promises? Do you trust his word? Or do grief and disappointment hinder your life?

Let's picture it. Jesus rose sometime before they arrived. He's standing outside the tomb in the garden. The disciples and women are so focused on the death that they may have even passed him running to the tomb. There he stood, watching them run back and forth, scared, crying, fearful of thieves robbing the tomb, missing angels, and missing him.

"Mary!" Jesus said. He realized she would only recognize him if he *went to her*.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher"). "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message. (Jn 20:16-18)

There's our faith, which is often so broken—but then there's the unbroken, unspoiled, gracious, generous vibrant faith of Jesus, who comes to us in our hour of need. In fact, Jesus would come to every one of the disciples and the women and his friends, revealing himself, continuing to be their Good Shepherd who would never leave or forsake them.

Only one, the Beloved Disciple, believed when he saw the head cloth and the linen wrappings lying there. He was the very first witness to see and believe. Later, Jesus would tell Thomas that some will believe in him having never seen him.

Are you one who sees Jesus? He will always come to you, and as he does, answer the call! He will help you see him—through a still small voice, through another believer, through answers to prayer, through seeking him with all your heart.

May you see him this morning—and believe.

HE IS RISEN!

AMEN