



**Sermon Series:** ALL SIGNS POINT TO JESUS

**To be used with Session:** The Ultimate Sign

**Sermon Title Possibilities:** THE EFFECTS OF THE RESURRECTION

**Scripture:** John 20:1-2, 11-18

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the Bible study “All Signs Point to Jesus” this sermon demonstrates that Jesus’s resurrection makes eternal life possible. All the signs we’ve studied thus far, from Jesus working in our lives for His glory to Jesus offering us the hope of eternal life, have been pointing to the ultimate sign, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. If Jesus died on the cross and failed to rise from the dead, He would have been no better than the two criminals that were crucified with Him. It may have made Jesus worse, because He claimed to be the Lord, but would have been found to be a liar, which would have made Him a deceiver, no better than the devil. Jesus’ resurrection validated all He did and claimed concerning Himself, that He is the Son of God and forgiveness of sin, reconciliation, fellowship with God, and eternal life are only found through Him.

**Introduction:** *The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection*, is a painting by Eugène Burnand based on John 20:1-10. It is Burnand's best-known work and shows the emotion and intensity of Peter and John. The painting captures the disciples running in the direction of the empty tomb. The younger disciple, John, with his hands clasped together, looks hopeful. The older disciple Peter, wide-eyed and with his hand over his heart, looks as if he is in shock. Although both are bewildered and their faith in doubt, they are at least running in the right direction to seek answers. For the believer, when our faith is being tested and we are seeking answers and for the unbeliever, when life is full of uncertainty and he or she is seeking answers, both need to run toward Jesus. His death and resurrection assure us, that no matter what problems we are facing in life, we can overcome anything because of the One who overcame sin and death by rising from the grave.

#### **EVIDENCE OF AN EMPTY TOMB (20:1-2).**

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to Jesus’s tomb early on Sunday morning to anoint His body, a Jewish custom done to control the smell of decomposition and to honor the dead because they did not have time to do it before the Sabbath (Mark 16:1). However, when the women arrived, with John specifically focusing on

Mary Magdalene, they found the stone removed from the entrance of the tomb and Jesus' body missing.

Jesus shared with multiple times with His disciples that He would rise from the dead (Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32-34; Luke 9:21-22) and implied His resurrection in the Gospel of John (John 2:19, 10:17-18). Despite this, the disciples still did not understand what He meant (Luke 18:34). However, when the women arrived at the tomb and found that it was empty, the light bulb should have gone off for them as well as His disciples that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. Jesus expected as much. In a conversation with two disciples on a road to a village called Emmaus, who expressed surprise that their companions and the women found the tomb empty, He said, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory" (Luke 18:25-26)? An empty tomb was evidence for Mary Magdalene, the other women, the disciples, and for us that Jesus has risen from the dead!

### **ENLIVENED BY THE RESURRECTION (20:11-16)**

Who are "they"? Who are the anonymous "they said," and "they did," that we point to when we have no explanation for a situation, or we believe something that we have little or no evidence for and we blame or point to "they." When questioned by the angels why she was crying, Mary was guilty of the same thing when she found Jesus' tomb empty, "they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put him" (John 20:13). Grief can cause us to blame a "they" that does not exist, despite evidence to the contrary. Jesus said that to help someone "listen," two or three witnesses should be called to establish a fact (Matt. 18:15-16). There was Jesus' predictions of rising from the dead. There was an empty tomb. There were two angels sitting where Jesus' body once was, and yet Mary still failed to "hear." How many times do we let feelings get in the way of faith and still blame "they." It often takes the voice of Jesus to speak past our feelings to our faith, stop us from looking for "they," and listen to Him. It was Jesus' voice that got Mary to listen and caused her to see things for what they really were. Jesus had risen from the dead and it turned her sorrow into joy.

### **EXCITED BY THE RESURRECTION (20:17-18).**

When Mary recognized that it was Jesus, she excitedly expressed "Rabboni," which *means* "teacher." She excitedly clung to Jesus. And she excitedly announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" The same enthusiasm that Mary had in sharing the Good News is the same enthusiasm that we should have when we share the Gospel. The excitement of Jesus's resurrection must start with His disciples before it can be shared with the world. If the disciples weren't enthused, why should the world be excited?

Have you lost your enthusiasm for your salvation and the excitement of sharing the Gospel? In the lyrics to *Take Me Back*, Andrae Crouch sings about how despite being blessed, he feels so far God, so much so, that his soul is unsatisfied, and he needs God to renew his

faith, restore his joy, and dry his weeping eyes. So, he cries out to God to take him back to place where he first received (the Gospel) and believed in Him. He believes that is the place where if he can remember it like it was today, he can get back the excitement he had when he first heard the Good News. It's Jesus' death and resurrection that is the foundation of the faith and the reason we have a joy that no one can take away (John 16:22). If we've lost our excitement, perhaps our prayer needs to be "take us back, dear Lord, where we first believed!"

**Conclusion:** Every believer, even mature believers, has occasional doubts about matters of faith. If we never have questions about our beliefs, it's a sign that we are not growing in the faith. We have experiences that deepen our faith, as well as experiences that cause us to doubt. The experiences that deepen our faith strengthen us. The experiences that cause us doubt stretch us. Both experiences are ultimately designed to build up our faith. The disciples doubted the resurrection to the point where when the women were telling them about the empty tomb, it seemed like nonsense (Luke 24:11). Yet God, revealed Himself in a tangible way that strengthen their faith, and alleviated their doubts (John 20:19-29). Do not allow doubt to cause you to draw away from the faith, but when in doubt, draw near to God, and He, who is already near, will draw nearer to you.

**Bio:** Dr. Jerome F. Coleman is lead pastor of the First Baptist Church of Crestmont, Willow Grove, PA, shepherding God's flock for 16 years. He has been happily married to his wife Kim for 28 years and is currently vice-president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention.