



**“Meeting Jesus: He Lives”**  
**John 20:1-31**  
**Dr. Jeff Reynolds**  
**Sunday, September 27, 2020**  
**Sermon Link: <https://bit.ly/2G4tfAS>**

When I was a kid, my absolute favorite song to sing in church was a hymn entitled “He Lives!” I can still see our Choir Director, Tuffy Jeannette, standing in front of our congregation, waving his hand, and leading us as we sang these amazing lyrics from our sage green hymnals:

**“He Lives!”**

By Alfred Henry Ackley

*I serve a Risen Savior, He’s in the world today / I know that He is living, whatever men may say.  
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer / And just the time I need Him, He’s always near.*

*In all the world around me I see His loving care / And though my heart grows weary I never will despair  
I know that He is leading, through all the stormy blast / The day of His appearing will come at last*

*Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian Lift up your voice and sing / Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ, the King  
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find / None other is so loving, so good and kind*

*Chorus:*

*He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today  
He walks with me and talks with me / Along life’s narrow way  
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart  
You ask me how I know He lives? / He lives within my heart*

You can hear the song here: <https://youtu.be/qF6aBDS3drA>

I loved that song for a lot of reasons, but one of the best lessons I learned from it was that the resurrection meant more than just a big celebration on Easter Sunday. The fact that Jesus lives impacts the world today, for He is alive in the world today. I can see His hand of mercy, I can hear His voice of cheer, and just the time I need Him, He’s always near. I can see His loving care, and I can be strengthened when I’m weary. I can sense His leading in my life, no matter the storm, and I know that He will emerge victorious in the end. I can rejoice, because He lives! As we trust and follow Jesus, it is vital that we understand that the power of Jesus’ resurrection makes as much difference in our lives today as it did on that first Easter Sunday morning.

**Big Idea – *Jesus lives.***

## 1. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over death (20:1-10).

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to their homes (John 20:1-10).

The resurrection is our definitive evidence that our God is able to overcome our greatest enemy – death. Jesus died the most brutal death the world has known. He was crucified, literally dying a death that can best be described as excruciating (i.e., Latin *ex-crucis*, "from the cross"). Isaiah had prophesied that "His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind" (Isaiah 52:14). In other words, the torture of the cross (and the corresponding beatings and floggings) left Jesus in such a devastated physical state that He was no longer recognizable as a human being. No wonder Mary Magdalene didn't recognize the resurrected Jesus; the last time she saw her Savior, He was a bloody mass of flesh and bone.

Before they took Jesus down from the cross, He was dead. Professional Roman executioners attested to that fact, for although they had broken the legs of the others being crucified alongside Jesus (to make them die faster from asphyxiation), they did not break Jesus' legs. Rather, they pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out (see John 19:31-37) resulting from the major pathophysiologic effects causing His death (likely hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia indicated by pericardial effusion—see *JAMA*, Edwards et. al, 1986; 255(11):1455-1463).

On the first day of the week, when the women and subsequently Peter and John saw the empty tomb, they were presented with the first human-viewed evidence that Jesus had overcome death. The One who had died now lived, never to die again. For all who trust and follow Him, physical resurrection awaits at His return. Because He lives, so also do we, in Christ, forevermore:

**1 Corinthians 15:20-26** – <sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

If you are in Christ, death does not have the final say for you. Because Jesus lives, so also do you. Because Jesus lives, so also *will* you, forever.

### Questions for Discussion/Reflection

1) What does your future look like in Christ? What difference does that make to you *now*?

## 2. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over sin and shame (20:11-18).

*<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> 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."<sup>14</sup> Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> 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.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her (John 20:11-18).*

After Peter and John went home, Mary remained at the tomb. The events of the last days, up to and including what was going on in this moment, were just too much for her. She was overwhelmed, exhausted, and emotionally spent. Now, the body of the One whom she had loved so dearly was missing. The disciples she had retrieved were no real help. They were gone, and she was alone. All she could do was stand at the tomb and weep.

The man whose body she was looking for had changed her life. When she met Him, she was plagued by seven demons (see Luke 8:2). We don't know what sort of havoc these demons had wreaked upon her, but there's no doubt that their influence was utterly hellish. Demons, like their master, come only to steal, kill, and destroy. They had no doubt been deeply destructive in her life.

Then she met Jesus, and He healed her. He cast the demons out of her, and instantly, her life got better. She was so moved by His influence in her life that she left whatever else she had to follow Jesus. She accompanied Him in His ministry (see Luke 8:1-3); she was there at the cross (see Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, and John 19:25), and now, she was standing outside the empty tomb. She loved her Lord, because He had so deeply loved her.

In her distress, Mary is greeted by two angels whose appearance is not enough to shake her out of her sorrow, and then she turns around and sees what she presumes to be the gardener. Mary is weeping—probably profusely—and the last time she saw Jesus, he was a mangled mess. She doesn't expect to see Him alive. Then He says her name...

Mary had likely heard her name spoken by many men, but I'm certain that no one said it the way Jesus did. Others might have named her as "Mary, the one possessed by demons" or "Mary, the one tormented by unseen forces" or "Mary, the one to be avoided." That's not how Jesus named her. He knew her as "Mary, the one whom He loved." His deep love for her undoubtedly affected the way He said her name, so when she heard her name pronounced with a love deeper than anything she'd ever known from any other source, she knew who it was who was speaking to her. She could never forget the loving, cleansing, healing power of that voice—the very voice of God. He had changed her life and forever removed her sin and shame.

### Questions for Reflection/Discussion

1) How has Jesus brought healing and hope to you? How does He pronounce your name?

### 3. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over fear and doubt (20:19-29).

<sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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 his side, I will never believe." <sup>26</sup> 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." <sup>27</sup> 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." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:19-29).

Even in light of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples are nevertheless afraid. It is now evening on the first Easter Sunday, and they've locked themselves behind closed doors to protect themselves from the same Jews who condemned Jesus. What might the Jews do to them?

Jesus appears and greets His disciples by speaking the word "peace." Luke records Jesus' words in Greek, but Jesus is clearly communicating the sentiment implied in the Hebrew *shalom*. Recall from our study in John 14 that *shalom* is the Hebrew word that we translate "peace," but the fuller definition of the word is "completeness, soundness, welfare, peace." The word connotes a sense of safety and soundness in one's body, a sense of welfare, health, and prosperity, all stemming from being in right relationship with God. The risen Jesus is speaking His supernatural *shalom* to them, and as they saw their resurrected Lord, they rejoiced. Jesus moved them from hiding in fear to rejoicing in faith, and He empowered them to carry out the ministry to which He was calling them by imparting His Holy Spirit to them.

But not all of Jesus' disciples were in the room. Thomas was missing, and he was still hurting. When the other disciples told him of Jesus' resurrection, he was incredulous. He needed to see Jesus, to touch Him, to be convinced that it was true. Eight days later, he had his chance. Jesus once again came to visit His disciples, and this time, Thomas was there. Jesus again greeted them with *shalom*, and He turned to Thomas. He held out His nail-scarred hands; He presented His spear-pierced side. He showed Thomas His wounds—everlasting trophies of the price He paid for our redemption. Thomas was overcome with adoration and worship: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus was calling Thomas to walk by faith, but Thomas was still relying on sight. When he saw Jesus, though, His faith drove Him to repentance and worship. He rightly confessed that Jesus is both Lord and God, just as His resurrection proclaims.

#### Questions for Reflection/Discussion

1) If you are in Christ, you have not seen the risen Jesus (yet) and nevertheless have believed (see 1 Peter 1:8). Jesus said that you are blessed because of your faith. How do you think you will respond when you meet the risen Christ in Glory? How does your faith carry you forward today?

#### 4. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over all things (20:30-31).

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> 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 20:30-31).

Jesus' resurrection is God's declaration that Jesus has won the victory—fully, finally, eternally. Jesus is the triumphant King to whom every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (see Philippians 2:10-11). Through the resurrection, Jesus is declared in power to be the Son of God (see Romans 1:4). Through the resurrection, Jesus has given us a living hope for an inheritance that cannot be taken away from us:

**1 Peter 1:3-5** - <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus points us to a hope that transcends this life. This world is not all there is, and the resurrection is the ultimate signpost to the eternal hope that we have in Christ. When the Apostle Paul was defending the reality of the coming resurrection of the saints to the church at Corinth, he made a deeply important point: if Jesus isn't raised, we are ruined. But if Jesus is raised, we are saved!

**1 Corinthians 15:13-19** - <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

"...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Does Jesus have to be raised for us to be saved? Unequivocally, yes. Do you have to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus to be saved? Unequivocally, yes. Why? If Christ is not raised, neither can we be raised. If Christ is still dead, we're done. The Bible teaches that Jesus was "delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). His death paid the penalty for our sin in full, and in His resurrection, God declared that He had accepted Christ's sacrifice on our behalf and now looked upon Christ with favor once again. In other words, the sin that was placed upon Christ (our sin) was fully atoned for, and Jesus no longer had any need to bear in His body our sins upon the tree. By His wounds, we have been healed (see 1 Peter 2:24).

The resurrection is God's ultimate declaration of victory over sin, Satan, death, and hell. The resurrection is God's foreshadowing of that great glory that awaits everyone who trusts and follows Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Just as Jesus lives, so also do we—in Him, forevermore. We have won the victory!

#### Questions for Reflection/Discussion

1) Do you believe that Jesus physically rose from the grave? How does Jesus' resurrection give you a living hope that transcends this world and cannot be taken away from you?

## Final Thought

“He Lives!” has always been a deeply impactful song in my life and one of my absolute favorites, but it isn’t the only hymn that has shaped my understanding of how the resurrection of Jesus Christ reaches beyond Easter Sunday to bless our everyday lives. There’s one more that I cannot help but sing when I think about Christ being raised from the dead: “Because He Lives.” This song was written by Bill and Gloria Gaither in the late 1960s, and I first encountered it in that same church as a solo sung by our Choir Director, Tuffy. It grabbed my heart instantly, and these profound words continue to stir my soul today...

### “Because He Lives”

By William J. and Gloria Gaither

*God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus; / He came to love, heal and forgive;  
He lived and died to buy my pardon, / An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!*

*How sweet to hold a newborn baby, / And feel the pride and joy he brings;  
But greater still the calm assurance: / This child can face uncertain days because He Lives!*

*And then one day, I'll cross the river, / I'll fight life's final war with pain;  
And then, as death gives way to victory, / I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives!*

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, / Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living, / Just because He lives!*

You can sing along with this song here: <https://youtu.be/pArSYcng438>

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not empty theological assertion. It is the triumphant declaration of God’s victory over all things, and it is the final proclamation of the victory that God has given everyone who trusts and follows Jesus Christ as Lord. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over death. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over sin and shame. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over fear and doubt. Because Jesus lives, we have victory over all things! Will you stand by faith in the victory Christ is offering you today?