

# Revelation!

## *Genuine Worship:*

**John 20:1-31**

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Our lengthy Scripture lesson was penned by the only man who personally examined Jesus' tomb and wrote about it. John along with Peter got the first report about the empty tomb, and John outran Peter to the place. John waited for Peter to inspect the tomb, and then entered himself. John was younger than Peter, and he and his brother James fished with Peter. The three of them joined Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The three accompanied Jesus to his private spot in the Garden of Gethsemane. John and Peter followed Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest. John knew the high priest and got a servant girl to let Peter in. John and Peter witnessed the abuse Jesus received.

When John wrote about the day of the resurrection, he focused on two things: revealing circumstances and revealing encounters. Let's consider the circumstances.

After explaining about the burial and the location of the tomb, John noted that the stone sealing the tomb was moved. The stone was not there to prevent the escape of a dead man. It prevented access to the body by animals and people. Removal of the stone invited access. The disciples would later come to understand that God removed the stone for people to see his great work. God wanted them to see. God wants you to see.

John also made note of the grave clothes. The head napkin was folded and separate from the other clothes. There is a story circulating that a folded napkin in Jewish custom signals the

return of the master. Thus the folded head napkin from the tomb heralds the return of Jesus. The problem with that story is that scholars have not found either a written or oral tradition about folded napkins. However, clothes are important. Adam and Eve had no clothes before they took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Upon this sin, their eyes were opened, and they realized their nakedness. In fear they sewed fig leaves together for clothes (Genesis 3:7). God made leather clothes for them, garments of skin, which required the sacrifice or death of animals. Spiritually, they would be clothed for God's presence through the death of a lamb. Jesus would be that lamb who takes away the sins of the world; Jesus would become our clothing, so that we walk and talk and live in Christ.

However, John saw grave clothes left behind. Would grave robbers neatly fold or wrap a head napkin? Would they even unwind Jesus from his grave clothes and the myrrh? John not only saw a sign of the resurrection in the grave clothes, he also saw the sign that the Last Adam has been restored. There was no longer any need for clothes. The clothes of death are abandoned, and so also any reason for fear, or concealment. Do you still fight with shame and the need to hide things? Do you feel the joy and confidence of being clothed in Christ who no longer needs even grave clothes? In Christ we don't need grave clothes either. It is not our future.

John also wrote about revealing encounters.

The first was with Mary. Jesus revealed himself to her. John writes about her despair and the amazing way Jesus came to her. In a moment, Jesus awakened Mary's heart and filled her life with joy. The resurrection may be public and carry implications for all humanity, but it is also intensely personal. God forms personal relationships with us. God forms them, not

because we are righteous. God forms them because he loves us and it is possible when we respond in faith.

The second encounter occurred in a locked room. Disciples had gathered and locked themselves in a room because they were afraid of those who killed Jesus. Jesus came and stood in their midst. He showed them his hands and side. They were overjoyed. In that moment, they experienced something powerful. Jesus blessed them, breathed on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit and commissioning them now to go even as he was sent by God his father. It was an awesome life changing moment.

I had a moment much like that when I was in ninth grade. I was at church camp assembled with many other people. While a friend played a guitar for evening devotions, the presence of Jesus came among us. He was not visible. I saw no hands or side. I heard no voice; but every one of us in that room began to shake. Some of the young men began to weep. My body tingled. My heart filled with love. My soul leaped in joy. At that moment, praising and serving Jesus was like the smoke from fire or refreshment from water. I was so glad that I was there. I am so thankful that God assembled me with others to seek and worship him.

At the momentous meeting held by the disciples, one of the Twelve was missing. For some reason, Thomas was not there.

Last week, we shared how God seeks worshipers. We examined how God used people's excitement about the healing of Lazarus to assemble a crowd for Jesus on Palm Sunday. God assembles people to connect with them in worship. Jesus said that wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be in their midst. There is a special way that Jesus becomes the focus and is revealed when we gather to honor him. God appeals to us to gather through the voices of your brothers and sisters. He uses human vessels. His aim is to connect with you.

A week later, Thomas joined the disciples in the house. He was skeptical. He could not believe the witness of his spiritual brothers. He had said:

***Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.*** (John 20:25, NIV)

Though the doors were locked, Jesus appeared again. He greeted them all: ***“Peace be with you.”***

Then he turned to Thomas:

***Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.*** (John 20:27, NIV)

With patience and grace, Jesus reached out to Thomas. Thomas responded, ***“My Lord and My God!”*** (John 20:28, NIV). This is John’s point. This is God’s purpose: that Jesus become your personal Lord and God. No distance. You are together.

John told these stories because with the same patience and grace, Jesus reaches out to you. Although the physical appearances of Jesus stopped with his ascension to heaven, his spiritual appearances continue.

Today, God gathered you to connect personally with him. God has assembled you through whatever and whomever in order for the two of you to connect. You may feel challenged and discouraged. You may be afraid. You may suffer greatly from the weight of grave clothes. Jesus died for you and rose for you, and he is your clothing; and he needs no covering anymore. Neither do you. Invite him now to deal with your hurt, your unbelief, your fear and your future. Let’s pray.