Two Enemies, One Empty Tomb

John 20:1–18

Sonrise Church • Life Group Study

Key Thoughts

1. **Two enemies stood between us and God:** Sin separates us from a holy God (Isaiah 64:6), and death seals the separation. Jesus entered Jerusalem knowing He would face both on our behalf.
2. **The cross conquered sin; the grave conquered death:** God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Then Jesus did what no one had ever done: He walked out of His own tomb.
3. **The empty tomb was intentional, not accidental:** The folded linens and the missing body point to a purposeful, methodical exit. This was no grave robbery. This was resurrection.
4. **Grief and wrong expectations can blind us to what God is doing:** Mary looked at the risen Jesus and saw a gardener. When we decide in advance what God should look like, we risk missing Him entirely.
5. Jesus calls by name and sends with purpose: One word from Jesus opened Mary's eyes. Then, rather than letting her cling to Him, He gave her a mission: go and tell the disciples. Her encounter with the risen Christ came with a commission to share what she had seen.

Discussion Questions

1. The sermon identifies sin and death as the two enemies standing between humanity and God. How does Hebrews 9:22 connect the shedding of blood to the defeat of the first enemy?

2. Read Matthew 27:42–43. The religious leaders challenged Jesus to come down from the cross. Why was staying on the cross the greater demonstration of power?

3. John notes that the burial linens were lying in place and the handkerchief was folded separately (John 20:6–7). Why does this detail matter for distinguishing resurrection from theft?

4. Mary had heard Jesus predict His death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21), yet she still assumed the body was stolen. What does her reaction teach us about the gap between hearing truth and truly comprehending it?

5. The sermon asks: "Have we set expectations as to how or what Jesus should be in our lives, and as a result, we are missing what He is doing right in front of us?" Where have you seen this in your own life?

6. After recognizing the risen Jesus, Mary was sent to tell the disciples (John 20:17–18). What is one way you can share the reality of the resurrection with someone this week?

Applications

1. **Open your eyes:** Identify one area of your life where grief, fear, or fixed expectations may be keeping you from seeing what God is doing. Bring it before Him in honest prayer this week.
2. **Rest in the finished work:** Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:21 this week. Let the truth that Jesus defeated both sin and death reshape how you face guilt, shame, or the fear of death.
3. **Go and tell:** Like Mary, you have been sent. Choose one person this week and share what the resurrection of Jesus means to you personally. A text, a conversation, or an invitation to church all count.

Closing Prayer

Father, we stand in awe of what You accomplished through Your Son. On the cross, Jesus took our sin upon Himself so that we might become Your righteousness. In the grave, He defeated death itself and walked out in victory. Forgive us for the times our grief, our assumptions, or our stubbornness have blinded us to what You are doing right in front of us. Open our eyes the way You opened Mary's. Call us by name. And then send us, as You sent her, to proclaim that Jesus is alive. We trust not in our own goodness but in the finished work of Christ. Salvation belongs to You. In Jesus' name, amen.