

**TEXT: John 20:1-18 Reading – John 20:10-18**

**DATE: April 24, 2011 Easter**

**TITLE: “THE DISCOVERY OF HOPE”**

**SERIES: “WHY WE HAVE HOPE!” #3 (WHY HOPE)**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**ILLUSTRATION: (\*Bag of microwave, not cooked and one cooked) It was an amazing discovery. According to the History Channel and a book compiled by Rick Beyer, the first batch of microwave popcorn was made in 1945. Engineer Perry Spencer was conducting tests on a magnetron, the powerful tube at the heart of radar sets, at the time. He reached into his pocket for a chocolate bar and found a gooey mess. Curious to see what was going on, he put a bag of corn kernels in front of the magnetron. The result is what some have called the first–ever batch of microwave popcorn. He patented the new method of cooking and his employer made the first model which weighed 750 pounds and cost \$3,000. Sales were limited, but it was the start of a discovery that has resulted in a microwave in homes and business throughout America. It was a discovery that changed cooking and food preparation in many parts of the world.**

**Today, we are going to look at a discovery that literally changed the world. A discovery that offers hope to the entire world. A discovery of hope.**

**I. (vs.1-15) A DISCOVERY THAT CALLS US TO LOOK FOR A LIVING JESUS**

1. Mary of Magdala was one of Jesus’ most devoted followers when He walked on the earth some 2000 years ago.
2. She had been transformed by Jesus, for in Jesus, she had found release, freedom, peace, forgiveness, and someone to believe in.
3. In Jesus, she had discovered hope.
4. We know from Scripture that she had watched Jesus die on the cross and that she stood by and watched as Christ was buried in a tomb.
5. The dreadful reality of the crucifixion crushed Mary and the followers of Jesus beyond measure, leaving hopelessly dark clouds of doubt and disappointment.
6. As if caught by the pull of a powerful magnet, sorrow and love compelled her in the early morning darkness to come to the tomb where they had placed the body of Jesus after He had died on the cross.
7. Shockingly, seeing the dislodging of the stone that had sealed the tomb, she assumed someone had taken the body of Christ.
8. Without further exploration, she came running to Simon Peter and another disciple with the disturbing report

**“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” (John 20:2)**

9. Hearing the alarming report, they raced to the tomb with the one called the Beloved Disciple arriving first at the scene but not entering the tomb.

10. Peter arrived and, seemingly matching his character, barged into the tomb to discover strips of linen and the folded burial cloth that had been around the head of Jesus laying there empty, as if Jesus had evaporated out of them.
11. Finally, entering the tomb, enabling him to see, the other disciple looked and believed.
12. He believed because of what he did and did not see in the tomb.
13. He recognizes God's fingerprints at the scene but was still limited in his understanding.
14. The lack of knowledge of scripture and ability to apply it to life made it hard for them to grasp what was taking place or the resurrection.

**ILLUSTRATION: One writer pointed out that the latest Harris Poll found that about 34% of the people in the United States do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.**

15. Do you believe?

**ILLUSTRATION: In May of 2001, Erik Weihenmayer, the blind mountaineer, was the first blind man to successfully scale Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. He reported, "A few days after I arrived in the Khumbu Valley for the Mount Everest climb, a rumor began circulating. Because I wasn't flopping on my face every few minutes, the Sherpas thought I was lying about my blindness. Women would approach me in the alleys of Namche Bazaar and wave their hands in front of my face. I'd feel the wind and flinch, which only confirmed their suspicions. Finally, I resorted to drastic measures. I asked Kami Tenzing, our climbing sirdar, into the kitchen tent. 'Kami,' I said, 'I want to give you a message to take back to the Sherpas.' I pulled down my left lower eyelid, leaned my head forward, and my prosthetic eye plopped into my palm. 'I can take the other out if you want,' I said. 'No!' he said firmly. 'Not necessary.' He believed and was able to convince the others."**

16. What does it take to believe the unbelievable?

17. Scripture has given proof and many eyewitnesses so that we will believe.

**"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (I Corinthians 15:3-8)**

18. The disciples left, leaving Mary standing outside the tomb crying, with a broken and confused heart, uncertain as to what had happened.
19. Lingered, she would see what the disciples missed.
20. The tears reflected her hopelessness.
21. With tear-stained eyes, she bent over to look into the tomb.
22. As intensely as she might stare through the tears, she would not see the body of Jesus in the tomb.
23. Mary was looking in the wrong place for the wrong Jesus.

24. She was looking in the place of death for the one who came to give the hope of eternal life.
25. She was looking for a Jesus that would only be in her past and not in her future.
26. She was looking for one who would be confined to the pages of history, not one who would write eternally on the hearts of people.
27. She was looking for a Jesus who had spoken but could no longer speak to her heart.
28. She was looking for a Jesus she thought was dead but would soon discover was alive.

**ILLUSTRATION: I have heard that possums are smart animals. You wouldn't think so because you hardly ever see one except when it's dead on the road. There's a joke that goes, "Why did the chicken cross the road? To prove to the possum that it could be done!" But possums, it turns out, are smart. They won't enter a hole if there's just one set of tracks going into it. They know there's something in there. But, if there are two sets of tracks, the possum will enter and not be afraid.**

29. As the disciples entered the tomb, they didn't see tracks that Jesus had left the tomb.
30. Mary may have thought she was alone after the disciples left, but she was soon to discover she was in the presence of the Divine.
31. She saw something that there is no record that the other two disciples saw.
32. She saw two angels, one at the head and the other at the foot, where Jesus' body had been.
33. The presence of the angels gave witness that the powers of heaven had been at work.
34. Seeing angels might have been a wonderful religious experience, but it did not satisfy the longing in her heart.
35. A religious experience, regardless of how great, is never a substitute for an encounter with the living Jesus.
36. As the tears continued to flow, they asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"
37. Through the tears, she sobbed out, "They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him."
38. In the pain of the moment, she turned around and saw Jesus but failed to recognize him.
39. It was when she turned away from the empty tomb that she saw Jesus.
40. Jesus said, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

**Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." (John 20:15)**

41. Jesus was right there but she did not recognize Him.

**Example: In Luke 24, we read about two disciples that were walking along with Jesus but they were kept from recognizing him. "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him."**

42. There are many things that keep people from seeing the risen Lord today.
43. Business, friends, problems, doubt, fears, bad experiences in the past, churches, hurt, and tears of pain are just a few.

44. She was not looking for a living Jesus.  
45. My prayer is that you would look and see the living Jesus.  
46. Are you willing to look for Jesus today?  
47. Are you willing to look for the living Jesus?

**ILLUSTRATION:** In his book, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, Ravi Zacharias tells a story about a girl who became hopelessly lost in a dark and dense forest. She called and screamed, but to no avail. Her alarmed parents and a group of volunteers searched frantically for her. When darkness fell, they had to give up for the night.

Early the next morning, the girl's father reentered the forest to search for her and spied her fast asleep on a rock. He called her name and ran toward her. Startled awake, she threw her arms out to him. As he picked her up and hugged her, she repeated over and over, "Daddy, I found you!"

Applying this story to Mary Magdalene's search for Jesus in John 20, Zacharias comments: "Mary discovered the most startling truth of all when she came looking for the body of Jesus. She did not realize that the person she had found was the One who was risen, and that He had come looking for her." We who believe on Jesus sometimes speak of "finding" Him. But why did we seek Him in the first place? Because, like the shepherd who went out into the darkness to find one lost sheep, God seeks us. He is waiting for us to realize our lostness and reach out to Him.

48. When we find Christ, we discover that we are the ones who were lost.  
49. She was looking for Jesus, but she did not realize Jesus was looking for her.  
50. Jesus wants you to discover the living Jesus today.  
51. Look for a living Jesus because He is looking for you.

**ILLUSTRATION:** \*\*"God hasn't given up on you. He can still do great things for you, in you, and through you. God is ready and waiting and able. What about you and me?" Peter Marshall

52. Jesus wants you to discover the hope that comes from a personal encounter with the living Jesus.

## **II. (vs.15-16) A DISCOVERY THAT CALLS US TO LISTEN AND RESPOND TO THE LIVING JESUS.**

**"Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher)." (John 20:16)**

1. When Jesus called her name, she knew she was talking with Jesus.
2. Jesus re-established the personal relationship that Mary thought she had forever lost.
3. Jesus wanted Mary to know it was Him and that He knew her.
4. Jesus wanted Mary to know Jesus was alive.
5. Jesus wants you to know He is alive.
6. He wants you to recognize His voice.

**Example: "The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep**

**follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” (John 10:3-5)**

7. The Lord doesn't want us to be a stranger.

8. He wants you to recognize His voice.

9. He wants you to respond to His voice.

**“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”**

**(Revelations 3:20)**

10. If you listen to the Word of God and His Spirit, you can hear Him reaching out to you.

**YOUTH: ILLUSTRATION: Are you listening? Can you hear? Do you know that He is near? He knows every tear? Are you listening? He is near.**

11. Listen with an open heart and you will hear Him call your name.

**“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (I Peter 2:9)**

12. He wants you to know Him.

13. He is calling to you today.

14. When different people call our name, we have different responses.

15. Mary responded by calling him “Rabboni!”, which literally means, “My teacher” or “My master.”

16. It was a personal response.

17. The Living Jesus was her answer for tears.

18. Jesus is still the answer for the tears of the world.

19. There is hope in the midst of the tears and pain of the world, for Jesus is alive.

20. The living Jesus is still the answer for our lives today if we will respond to His call.

21. The risen Christ is the answer to our tears over life; Christ is the answer to our tears over death.

22. It is Jesus that makes the difference.

**“Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need...” (Hebrews 7:23-26)**

23. It is not a church that meets our needs or dries the deep tears of our soul.

24. It is not being a good person that meets my needs and dries my tears, but Jesus.

25. It is not religion that answers my tears of loss, but Jesus.

26. When we come to the place where we know He lives, lives within our hearts, religion is no longer something out there, but something in here.

27. Jesus makes the difference

**ILLUSTRATION: “He that lives in hope danceth without music.”**

**(George Herbert)**

28. It is a hope based upon Jesus and not the circumstances of our lives.

29. How will you respond to the living Jesus?

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

30. How will you respond to His love?

**ILLUSTRATION: On Monday, August 9, 1993, a 31-year-old woman, Sophia White, burst into the hospital nursery at UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles, wielding a .38-caliber handgun. She had come gunning for Elizabeth Staten, a nurse whom she accused of stealing her husband. White fired six shots, hitting Staten in the wrist and stomach. Staten fled, and White chased her into the emergency room, firing once more. There, with blood on her clothes and a hot pistol in her hand, the attacker was met by another nurse, Joan Black, who did the unthinkable. Black walked calmly to the gun-toting woman, hugged her and spoke comforting words. The assailant said she didn't have anything to live for, that Staten had stolen her family.**

**“You're in pain,” Black said. “I'm sorry, but everybody has pain in their lives...I understand, and we can work it out.” As they talked, the hospital invader kept her finger on the trigger. Once she began to lift the gun as if to shoot herself. Nurse Black just pushed her arm down and continued to hold her. At last, Sophia White gave the gun to the nurse.**

31. She was disarmed by a hug.

32. Love made the difference.

33. It is amazing what love can do.

34. It is amazing what God's love can do.

35. God's love reaches out to me and you.

36. The cross is when Jesus stretched out His arms of love for you.

37. Because of the tomb, He reaches out to embrace with a love that gives hope.

38. The empty tomb means Jesus is alive to love you.

### **III. (vs.17-18) A DISCOVERY THAT CALLS US TO LEARN WHAT THE LIVING JESUS MEANS FOR YOU**

1. Easter is not just the celebration that Jesus is risen from the dead.

2. Easter is the discovery of what it means for you.

**ILLUSTRATION:\*\*\* Wolfhart Pannenberg, German theologian (1928- ), “The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.”**

3. The reality of Easter changed the world of Mary and the disciples.

4. The discovery of hope changed their lives forever.

5. Jesus had more to say to Mary.

**“Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”(John 20:17)**

6. Some have stated that we should understand the Greek tense here in the strictest sense. The present imperative with a negative means, "Stop doing something, Stop clinging."
7. Mary had to let go of the earthly Jesus so He could finish His work
8. Mary had the honor of being the first to see the risen Lord, but also of being the first to be sent by Him to bear the good news.
9. She was to tell them, "**I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.**" (John 20:17)
10. She was to tell them that Jesus is who He said he was and He was doing what He said He would do.
11. He is the one who has conquered death and returned to the Father.
- ILLUSTRATION: (\*Cartoon of this, second one with punch line) Phil Callaway shares this story. "One sleepy Sunday afternoon when my son was five-years-old, we drove past a cemetery together. Noticing a large pile of dirt beside a newly excavated grave, he pointed and said: "Look, Dad, one got out!" I laughed, but now, every time I pass a graveyard, I'm reminded of the One who got out." (Phil Callaway, from the April 16 entry of Men of Integrity) (March/April 2006)**
12. The resurrection from the dead means Jesus was successful.
13. Jesus wanted His disciples to learn He is alive and on His way to His Father to complete His saving task.
14. The Father is His center of reference, and to return to Him is His greatest joy, and therefore, the joy of His disciples.
15. Jesus was saying, "My Father is your Father."
16. Jesus was the way for the disciples to have a personal relationship with God the Father.
- "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"** (John 14:6)
17. Jesus is the way for us to the Father.
18. The resurrection meant Jesus was going back to God.
- ILLUSTRATION: Dr. Joseph Haroutunian, professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, came to America from Armenia. One day, a well-meaning friend said to him, "Your name is difficult to pronounce and difficult to spell – it could hurt your professional career. Why don't you change your name to Harwood or Harwell or something like that?" Dr. Haroutunian asked, "What do those names mean?" His friend said, "Well, nothing. They're just easier to remember." Dr. Haroutunian said, "In Armenia, when my grandfather was baptized, they name him Haroutunian, which means "Resurrection." I am Joseph Haroutunian and I will be a son of Resurrection all my days."**
19. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ today, you are a child of resurrection power.
20. It means nothing is impossible, no situation is hopeless because of who you are in Christ.
21. It means that through Jesus, we now have a relationship with God the Father.

22. What does this mean to you and me?
23. It means the sin that separates me from God can be removed through Jesus.
24. It means you can have a right relationship with God.
25. The God of Jesus is now also the God of the disciples.
26. It means the promises of God are yours.

**ILLUSTRATION: \*\* One pastor said it this way, "The world offers promises full of emptiness. But, Easter offers emptiness full of promise." (Unknown)**

27. The empty cross, empty tomb, empty grave-clothes ... all full of promise.
28. In those days when we feel empty, beaten down or alone, the promise of the risen Lord brings hope.

**ILLUSTRATION: Ten-year-old Phineas was up before the sun. He'd scarcely slept the night before. The year was 1820 and he was already sitting in the carriage ready to see his island for the first time in his life. On the day he was born, Phineas' grandfather had presented him with a deed – it was a sizable portion of Connecticut called "Ivy Island." Today, Phineas was about to see it for the first time. Being a landowner made him different from the other boys. While they dreamed of dragons and knights, Phineas' dreams were of Ivy Island, building his estate, starting a farm, raising cattle, being ruler of his own domain. For years, he had begged his father to show him the land, finally his dad consented. Phineas, his father, and a hired man were now riding in the buggy to see his estate. Phineas could hardly bear the anticipation. Finally, his Dad pointed over a meadow, beyond a row of tall trees stretching to the sky. "There, is Ivy Island." He jumped from the wagon, dashed through the meadow, raced to the row of trees to an opening where Ivy Island was visible. When he saw the land, he stopped. His mind whirled, his heart began to sink. Ivy Island was five acres of snake-infested marshland. His grandfather had told him it was the most valuable land in the state. His dad had told him it was a generous gift. It wasn't, it was a cruel joke. As stunned Phineas stared, his father and the hired man roared with laughter. Phineas didn't laugh, nor did he forget. The disappointment shaped his life. Some have said, "He, the deceived, entered a lifetime of deception." The little boy, fooled, made a career out of fooling others. He was an American showman who is best remembered for his entertaining hoaxes and for founding the circus. You don't know him as Phineas, [PICTURE OF P.T. BARNUM] you may know him by his last name, Barnum – P.T. Barnum. Though some have said he said it, R.J. Brown asserts that the phrase "*There is a SUCKER BORN every MINUTE," actually originated with a banker named David Hannum, in regard to one of Barnum's hoaxes.***

29. The world makes a lot of promises, but they are promises the world cannot fulfill.
30. As someone said, they are smoke and mirrors, attempts to distract us from the gaping holes in the middle of our souls (or to sell us the latest product in order to fill them).
31. The promises of the world are truly empty.
32. Promises of relationships that satisfy but leave you unfulfilled.

33. Promises of successes that can leave you empty.
34. Promises of wealth that can leave you empty.
35. Promises of fun and joy that leave you empty.
36. Promises of fulfillment through adultery and pornography that leave you wounded and empty.
37. You don't have to fill emptiness with things that leave you empty.
38. Let the living Christ of the empty tomb fill your heart.
- "Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her." (John 20:18)**
39. Mary Magdalene is an eyewitness.
40. The Greek is very vivid. Literally, "Mary came telling!"
41. She couldn't stop talking about her encounter with the risen Lord.
42. The mourner has become the missionary!
43. "I have seen the Lord!"
44. Mary has firsthand knowledge and she had something to tell.
45. But the risen Christ provides power, promise, and proof that this earth is not all there is.
46. He made the crucial point with Mary, in His resurrection, that because He was alive, she could be sure that all was changed for her.
47. Elsewhere, Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also."
48. That's the message of Easter.
49. It's the crucial matter of all of history.
50. Hope broke through because Christ rose from the dead.
- "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)**
51. The living Lord is our source of hope.
52. The living Jesus means you can experience salvation.
- ILLUSTRATION: The title of a play written by Eugene O'Neill is, "It's called A Long Day's Journey into Night." As I understand it, the theme is that life is heading toward darkness and that it gets darker as you go along. For the Christian, it's different. Life is getting brighter as we go along. Mary came to the tomb while it was still dark, not only outside, but inside. In her mind, it was still dark, because she did not know yet that Christ is alive. She left in the brightened of the hope of the risen Lord.**
53. Mary came to the tomb while it was still dark, but when she left there, she was walking in the greatest light in all the world: the light of the knowledge that Christ rose.
- "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,..." (I Peter 1:3)**
54. Are you living in the hope of the Risen Lord?
55. Surrender your life to Christ and learn what the Living Jesus can mean for you.
56. Mary's message could alert the disciples to the fact that Jesus was alive, but they had to come to faith for themselves.
57. You must come to faith yourself.

58. Christianity does not mean knowing about Jesus; it means knowing Him.

59. It does not mean arguing about Him; it means meeting Him.

60. It means you can have eternal life.

**“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in CHrst Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)**

**ILLUSTRATION:** In the early days of World War II, half of France was occupied by German captors, half was free. The goal of the people of Paris was to escape into Free France. Etta, an American living in France at the time, wrote a book entitled, “Paris-Underground” to tell the world what Nazi-domination was like. She tells of a certain village near the border dividing Free and Nazi-France. Every time there was a funeral at the local cemetery, there were more mourners that would go in then came out. While the main gate of the cemetery lay in occupied France, far to the rear was an old forgotten door on the ancient wall. That door opened up to unoccupied territory. Those who entered the burial place weeping and mourning walked right on through to the other side, and emerged into a land of liberty and life.

**61. Why Hope? Death is not all there is to it!**

**62. Why Hope? By His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus opened a gate in the rear of the cemetery.**

**63. Why Hope? Death could not hold onto Him.**

**64. Why Hope? Our hope is that there is a whole new world out there just waiting!!**

**65. Why Hope? And the best is yet to come!!!**

66. This is why we have hope.

67. Learn what the Living Jesus means for you.

**CONCLUSION: Have you made the discovery of hope?**

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