



Sermon Growth Guide

April 20, 2025
The Second Turning



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“The Second Turning”

John 20:11-18

Key Verse: John 20:17

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’”

Big Idea: He Is Risen!

Foundations

In this passage, we celebrate the good news of Jesus’ glorious resurrection. And yet, it also contains one of Jesus’ strangest commands to one of his followers: “Do not hold on to me.” Jesus’ resurrection body must be different from his earthly one. He is clearly recognizable, yet Mary does not immediately recognize him. In one of the most beautiful and personal moments in Scripture, Mary knows Jesus as soon as he says her name. Her joy knows no bounds as she rushes to him. But Jesus tells her, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.”

In our humanity, we connect most to the earthly Jesus. But the resurrection is not the final completion of the good news. Jesus must ascend to the Father, where his reign over all things begins. And so Mary can’t hold on to him. He came personally for her—but not only for her. He came for the whole world. And so she has to let him go. Jesus knew that this part of the good news would make his disciples sad. That’s why he tells them in advance: “Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I go away” (John 16:7). The earthly Jesus could only appear to a few people. But the ascended Jesus sends the Spirit so that his power and presence can be with each of his followers at all times.

Jesus’ reign begins now, through each and every one of us who follow him through faith. And that is very good news. Therefore, instead of holding on to the earthly Jesus, we have to let him go to the Father. For he has risen indeed!

Understanding God’s Word

Read John 20:11-18 together.

Which parts of this passage stand out to each one of you? Why do you think Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first? What part do the resurrection and ascension play in the good news about Jesus? Ephesians 1:15-23 might be helpful.

Applying God’s Word

Because of the resurrection we have new life in Christ. What does that look like in your life?

Because of the ascension, Jesus is above every power and authority on earth. How does that affect the way we live right now?

How does the hope of eternal life affect how we live life now?

Witnessing God’s Word

Jesus called Mary to be the first witness to his resurrection and ascension. She told the other disciples that she had “seen the Lord,” and repeated his message. How have you “seen the Lord?” in a way that you could share with others?

How would you explain the Gospel message to anyone who is curious about the “hope you have?” (1 Peter 3:15)

Sometimes God lets you see something you didn't see before, even though maybe you have looked at it a hundred times. And once you do see it, you never fail to see it again. It's like when a friend visits, and you take them over to Garden of the Gods. You say, "There's the kissing camels." And they say, "The what?" "Those rocks, the kissing camels." Abigail is better at this than me. I say, "See those two humps, and the camels..." She says, "Look at that diamond-shaped hole. Just there. It looks like two camels kissing." Ah! Got it! And then you never see anything but kissing camels from then on. Some say they can see the face of Jesus on Pikes Peak. I still can't. One day. Scripture is like that. This passage is like that. There are always things you didn't see, things God shows you. You can read a passage a hundred times, then read it one more time and you see something you never knew was there.

Maybe you mostly come to church at Christmas and Easter. If that's you, I'm really glad you're here! You've probably heard this passage, but I want to show you something and I wonder if you've ever seen it before. Mary comes to the garden tomb. Jesus was crucified on Friday, taken down from the cross, wrapped up and carried to Joseph's tomb and laid to rest. Sunday morning, Mary goes down to the tomb, and it's empty. She starts crying. Two angels talk to her, and then this: "At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus." (John 20:14) She turned and saw Jesus standing there. But watch this down at verse 16: "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher')." (John 20:16) She turned toward him, it says. But she was already facing Him. She had already turned toward Him. They were standing face to face. If you were writing a screenplay, you wouldn't know what to tell the actors to do. You would say "Now turn toward him." She'd be like, "Huh? I'm staring right at him!" Do you see it? I have studied the Greek. I have looked into

the commentaries. I have sought the wisdom of the ancients. I've nerded out. What is this second turning? The best I've got for you is this, it is the turning of her heart to Jesus. It's conversion. The Jesus you've looked at before, Jesus you've looked at a hundred times suddenly is different, suddenly you see. We've been in a series called Turn Again. Turn again toward Jesus. This is meeting Jesus. This is coming to Christ. This is being, as Jesus said, born again from above. This is entrusting your life to God. This is new life. The Second Turning is what we need. Jesus is right in front of you, but do you see? Turn again. Believe. Turn again.

"Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb." (John 20:11) There is plenty to cry about in life, always enough to cry about. And we need to cry sometimes. The Christian word for it is lament. Lament is about getting it out, being honest with God about how much it hurts sometimes to live a broken life in a broken world and wait for it to get better. Over a third of the Psalms are Psalms of Lament. We think Christianity is about getting our act together; God just wants you to come to Him with your act; together, not together, whatever! God wants to hear your heart, even when your heart is sad; especially when your heart is sad. But lament doesn't camp out in the mess. It's not just wallowing in pain or self-pity. Mark Vroegop says, "Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust." Not a cul-de-sac of complaint, but a walk with God through hurt that leads to a deeper reality than the reality of the moment, a truer true—that even in pain you can trust God. Mary stood outside the tomb crying. Is that you? Sometimes that's all we've got.

"They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.'" (John 20:13) The angels asked her about her tears. What is the basis for this lament? Well, she has been through a horrible trauma, but as for



the empty tomb, Mary jumps to a reasonable explanation; she reaches for something that makes sense. The tomb is empty. Nobody expected no body. They must have taken Him somewhere. What do you believe about Jesus? What is the rational explanation? Many don't even believe Jesus existed, despite more historical attestation of the existence of this man than any person ever. Most do believe He existed. He was, but who was He? A teacher? A moral philosopher? A wonder-worker? What are we supposed to believe? What do you think the average Colorado Springs citizen believes? Jesus was a good guy, a special person, but people don't rise from the dead. Somewhere lies a pile of bones. That's the rational explanation, isn't it? Where's the body? They took Him somewhere.

"At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus." (John 20:14) Jesus is right in front of her, and she doesn't see Him. Jesus is standing right there. She is looking at Him and doesn't see Him. What do you know about Jesus? What do you think of Him? The same information is right there in front of you, the same stories, the same set of facts. What would make you turn again and see something you didn't see before? She thought He was the gardener. She thought Jesus was dead. "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher')." (John 20:16) Mary turned to see the gardener, but when Jesus said her name, she "turned again" and saw that it was Him! What is this second turning? What happens in her heart and mind to open her eyes to Jesus right there before her face?

We think of Christianity as an offer to take up a set of beliefs, a philosophy of life, or a pattern of habits for healthy living. No. What is on offer is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When you see Jesus before you, and see Him for who He is, a radical and complete transformation of your life follows. You no longer want to go the direction you previously walked. You

are no longer convinced of things you previously held as indubitable realities. You are no longer thirsty to desires you previously considered the greatest pleasures available to human life. You are new. A new destination. A new mind. A new heart. The old is gone; the new has come. That's what happened to Mary, and it can happen to you. Turn again.

"Well, I thought Jesus was dead. Easter is sweet. It's fun for kids. But people don't rise from the dead." All this series, we have been sharing testimonies from our own people here in this church, just like the testimony you just heard from Sophie. Are you sure Jesus is dead? Scott said meeting Jesus filled a hole inside his heart and started a journey of following Jesus. "The most beautiful part of being in a relationship with Jesus is the journey." His life is directed by his relationship with Jesus Christ. I thought Jesus was in a grave. Dick was interested in a girl and then Jesus showed up and changed his heart and altered his convictions. "I'm convinced that he drew me to himself," he said. I thought Jesus was a figure in history; those don't show up like this. Shannon came to First Pres and "I found out there was a Jesus who actually loved me." Actual love? But Jesus is just a pile of bones in tomb. Ken made some mistakes as a young man and got arrested. Jesus met him in that. He has been walking with Jesus for forty-five years now. So, he says! Not me. "Now that my heart has been changed, I can see what a difference it makes whenever someone is willing to submit to the words that Jesus said," said Ken. That doesn't sound like the influence of a dead man.

Jesus is alive. Jesus is not a myth or history or a figment of our spiritual hopes. When I say Jesus is alive, I don't mean it in a "He's always with us if we keep His memory" kind of way, or a "If do what He taught He's still 'alive'" in quotes. No! I mean Jesus is alive. I mean the tomb is empty. I mean, Jesus, the Son of God, came from heaven and took on flesh, and He was arrested and beaten and killed on a cross taking all our sins on Himself,



and He was buried, cold and dark, in a tomb outside of Jerusalem, and on the third day, Sunday, Jesus rose again from the dead. He rose again. Death couldn't handle Him; the grave couldn't hold Him. He rose. His body got up and the stone was blown away and He walked out of there alive. And that body went to Heaven, and His Holy Spirit is right here with us. Jesus is alive. You have seen so much of Him; He is standing right before you. Turn again and see.

Sophie said as soon as she walked through the doors of the church, "from the moment I walked in the doors... the Holy Spirit's presence was so intense." The Lord is here. He's alive. One other story was from Cinthia. Cinthia said a friend asked her where she would go after she died. She went to a small group and met Jesus. Not "learned about." Not "thought about." Not "studied what He taught." She met Jesus. He's alive. Now she knows where she will be after she dies. If Jesus came, died, and rose from the dead; and if Jesus is alive now and reaching into each of our lives, then Jesus has authority to say what will happen after I die. I will be with Him.

Do you know? I don't mind asking you. Do you know where you will be after you die? One thing I learned this year, truly, is that none of us knows how long our lives will be. I have been at funerals this year ranging from 95 years old to nine months. You don't know the number of your days. And when that comes, on that last moment, in that last hour, there is only one question: did you turn again to Jesus? Did you see Him like Mary saw Him? Did you give Him your life to care for and keep? Tomorrow is promised to no one. Here is the truth, we will all come to that last moment, and if when you die, you die in your sins; if when you die, you die without knowing Jesus and His forgiveness, then you will die separated from God, divorced from the Author of Life, subject to punishment for the things you have done. But if you turn to Jesus.

If you open your eyes and open your heart to Him, a humble spirit God will in no way despise. He welcomes those who turn to Him.

Jesus has eternal life on offer. And He has proven Himself good to deliver. There is so much unhappiness and pain in the world. Do you know why? Because we don't turn to Jesus. The unhappiness is that you are separated from God. The anxiety is because you are far from the Lord, who says be not anxious. The unrest is because you are divorced from the God of all peace. If you are wrong with God, everything is wrong. If you are right with God, everything is right.

Do you feel far from God? It isn't God that moved. Turn again. Turn again to Jesus. He is right here.

I want to pray for you. I encourage you to make this prayer your own. To be clear, I want to give you a chance, right now, to turn again to Jesus. This is the offer. Forgiveness. Grace. Peace. Joy. Eternal life. It is in Jesus. You meet Him in prayer. Make this prayer your own this morning: "Jesus, Eternal One, You conquered the grave. You took away sin. You won eternal life. I see You now. In a new light, I see You. Thank you. I love You. I trust You with my life, today, tomorrow, and all my tomorrows until I walk into eternal life with You. Save me, and I will be saved. Turn me and I will be turned. In Jesus name. Amen." If you prayed for the first time, please talk to one of us. We have a baptism service next week, April 27. Maybe it is time to come to the water. If you have renewed your faith today, share that with someone. New life is here in Jesus. Amen.

