

Easter

4-5-2020

Hello and happy Easter Sunday to our Southeast family. I'm so glad that you're here. And for the record, I prefer to call it resurrection Sunday. I think that's more appropriate, but I'm glad that you've chosen to jump in here and tune in with us this most important of days.

We're going to continue with worship in our giving right now. This is as much an act of worship as anything else that we do. And so if you're giving online, we'd love for you to do that. That's the easiest way during this time, having to shelter in place, to be able to do that. If not, feel free to mail it in to our church offices and we will make sure that we get that picked up.

I saw a thing bounce around on Facebook, cause now that we're stuck at home, I'm on Facebook more for, for better or for worse. I'm on Facebook more. And there was a thing flying around about a reporter that was saying that it's going to be sad this year because it's the first year we're not going to celebrate Easter. And, of course, everybody was like, wait a minute. Whoa, Whoa, Whoa. We're going to celebrate like word. We're going to celebrate. We're just doing it different, right? So here's what I want just to make a point right now. If want you to, if you need to, if you feel like you're going to miss something, you can pause the live stream. But here's I want you

to do, I want you to run outside of your door, front door, back door, doesn't matter, and I want you to yell in your neighborhood. Jesus is alive.

Mark, set. Go.

All right, that was long enough. I hope you did that and I hope you heard maybe some of your neighbors that maybe you didn't know came to our church. Maybe you can hear them off in the distance. It's important for us to remember this, we're not, we're not playing. When we're talking about the power of resurrection, this is the most important thing that we can talk about. The power that even conquers death is alive and at work in you and me, whether we're at home in our living room watching this online or we're in this room that I'm standing in right now, doesn't matter. That power is alive and at work and it matters that that is taking over little by little by little. The kingdom is coming to earth and so I'm so excited about this. Today we're going to look at some of John's perspective on the resurrection and maybe at one level, one of the things that he's trying to communicate.

So Friday for good Friday and I hope you enjoyed that interview, we've talked a little bit about Mark's perspective, the gospel of Mark and Mark's perspective on the cross and what's going on there. What I want to show us today is a little bit of John's perspective and what John's doing with the resurrection. And it's beautiful because not only does John do it here, but he

also does it back in John at the beginning of the book of John when Jesus is baptized. John also paints a picture of this whole idea and so we're going to tie some thoughts together. John, from the get go, John 1:1 in the beginning. Well we should immediately be asking ourselves already. Have I heard that phrase anywhere else? And the answer is I hope so. Cause Genesis 1:1 "in the beginning, God created," and just so John begins with this, "in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning and everything was made by him and nothing that was made wasn't made by through him". That whole, that whole John two -- one, two, three -- like it's all a retelling of Genesis. That's one of the things that John is doing. And the question is why is that so important? Well, it's so important because John's agenda is, if you remember when we were talking a few weeks ago about the sermon -- begin in the beginning, like John, one of John's agendas is that he wants to keep bringing us back to this idea of there's life beyond this broken flesh. There's this invitation to restore in the world what sin broke. And that's part of John's agenda in his gospel. And so you ought to see that theme keeps showing up, that theme of new creation, that theme of what's going on there with all of that. And so I want to take a look at a really fun passage in John chapter 20 and before we get there, we've got to set a little bit of context. So what's happened is that Jesus was crucified, he was in the tomb, and then he is going to appear and reappear to Mary. And then, John never refers to himself as John, but he talks about himself a lot in his gospel. He calls himself the apostle whom Jesus loved. You know, I watched the Jesus

movie and there all so stoic and that may have been their personalities. I don't know, but what I can tell you for sure is I think John is a jokester. I think he's the one that's like, "Hey, I just want you guys to know, I know Jesus likes you and everything, but I'm the one he loves." I think he's constantly ribbing the guys and I think he's constantly getting under their skin a little bit because he's like, "yeah, I'm the one that, you know, got to sit next to him, got to lay back against his chest or in the middle. You guys remember that? That was me. I was kind of the one that was in that position of honor, kind of a big deal. It wasn't Peter and Peter, he's, he's okay, whatever. I mean, Jesus likes him, but I'm the one that he loves." This interplay goes throughout John's gospel and it's hilarious if you pay attention to it, what's happening and how John just keeps trying to rib Peter and make him look bad.

So with that in mind, we're going to pick this up in John chapter 20 and look at this story. It says, "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. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved." Who is that? John, right? He went to Peter and the other disciple, not just any disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. I don't know if you know this, but who does Jesus love and has two thumbs? This guy that's, that's exactly what John is doing in this over and over and over again. And it's a fun interplay between him and Peter. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, you know the one whom Jesus loved and has two thumbs, and said to them,

“they've taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they've laid him.”

“So Peter went out with the other disciple, the one that Jesus loved, and they were going toward the tomb and both of them were running together. But the other disciple outran Peter”. I just want to point that out. There's no bearing on the story, but, as you know, the other disciple, perhaps it might be important for me to make note of the fact that I'm faster than Peter. Peter always gets to speak first. He's the oldest blah,blah,bah, but he's slow. I can tell you that much. You know why? Because I outran him. So, “Peter ran with the other disciple and they were going towards the tomb and both of them were running together. But the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first and stooping to look in, he saw the linen clothes lying there, but he did not go in.”

Why? Because he's respectful. This is my editorial note here. This is Aaron couch paraphrase version. But he didn't go in. Let's keep reading. “Then Simon Peter came following him, went into the tomb, just went right in” Didn't even care. “He saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself”. By the way, that's a, we don't have time today, but, why do I need to know that detail? Research. Then, the other disciple, you know, the one who had reached the tomb first because he was faster than Peter, that guy, “he also went in and he saw and believed for as yet they did not

understand the scripture that he must rise from dead. And then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her “woman, why are you weeping?” Well, okay, first of all, just me, this is just Aaron Couch talking for a minute. But I think that's a dumb question. Like, why are you weeping? Whoa, cause this feels catastrophic!

Let's keep reading. “She said to them, they've taken away my Lord and I do not know where they've laid him. And having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her ‘woman, why are you weeping? ‘ And to which she replied, why does everybody keep asking me that question? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be a gardener,” Now if you have your Bibles open, you should probably underline that statement. Cause remember John's agenda is to keep getting people to try to return back to this Genesis one mindset -- that there's more to life than this broken flesh that we live in, that we want to work towards restoring what sin broke that all those pieces that we've been talking about, all of that is in play in the gospel of John.

So, when he says, she mistook him for a gardener, there's a statement that John's make, in the actual Greek there, there's a parenthetical statement that goes like this, wink, wink, nudge,

nudge -- there's more going on here than just the words. And John is being super subtle about it, but he's doing it in a way that his first readers would have gotten it. So, let's keep reading. Supposing him to be a gardener, she said to him, "sir, if you've carried him away, tell me where you've laid him and I will take him away. And Jesus said to her, Mary, and she turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher" -- by the way, doesn't just mean teacher. Rabboni means our teacher, which is, that's a cut above rabbi. That's rabbi means teacher. Rabboni, is like our teacher. This is a huge honor that she gives him, like she is giving the best word to him that she knows how to utter in that moment. Let's keep reading. "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 to your God.

Mary Magdalen went and announced to the disciples, I've seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her. So, here's what's happening in this story. John, first of all is trying to make a point that he's better than Peter over and over and over again, which is hilarious. You got to know that as they're sitting in Jerusalem long after Jesus is gone and there he's, he's writing his gospel down and he, well he's not in Jerusalem, he's over in Ephesus, but he sends it to Peter, said, Hey Peter, you got to read this story that I wrote. It's awesome. And you know, Peter sent it back. Like if they had FaceTime, Peter would have looked at him and gone, really? Because you make me look bad over

and over and over. And John's like, I know, cause you're great, but I'm the one, he loved me.

This guy John has this play with Peter that's so much fun. And it goes all the way through his gospel. It goes all the way through his gospel, even all the way to the restoration of Peter. But that's another conversation. And so, John and Peter have this interplay where they see that they're told about the risen tomb. They go, they see it for themselves, and then Mary has this moment with Jesus where she mistakes him for a gardener. Why? What's going on there? John's agenda over and over and over again is to try to point people back to the fact that Jesus coming as the price for sin, coming as the one who steps into our place before God, coming as the sacrifice for us. His main message is that he's opening up this opportunity for you and I to get back to where we were created to be in the first place, like we don't have to stay locked in the brokenness.

We don't have to stay locked in the mess. We don't have to stay locked in any of this stuff that keeps us stuck. Jesus, his invitation is to come back and it's at the beginning of his ministry and John at the baptism that he has and it's at his resurrection. This continual pursuit of John to convey this message that God is looking to restore in the world. What sin broke. And he's inviting us to partner with him. And not only is he inviting us to partner with him, but he's cleared all the roadblocks. There's no excuses, no reasons why we shouldn't be a part of what he's doing. And he's completely given us the



power to pull it off. Not only does he give us the spirit living in us, but beyond that, the power that conquered death is at work in you and me.

No, I know that. That's maybe some years ago, I don't know. That gold gardener thing. Well, let's, let's look at this. We want two witnesses, right? It's always confirmed and two witnesses. So let's look at another angle of the gospel of John here. And I want to show you something that is particularly fascinating. I want to look at, take a look at the signs of the book of John. Okay. If you've ever followed the signs of the book of John, go in and read the gospel today and Mark them. What are the miracles that happen in the book of John? Here's what they are.

Number one, Jesus turns water into wine in John chapter two. John even says this is the first sign that Jesus did. He claims it. This is the first sign, and then let's keep reading -- John four the official's son, he heals the official's son and he says, this is the second sign that Jesus performed. Then we have the lame man in John five and we have the bread in John six and the water in John six and then we have the blind man in John nine and then number seven is Jesus raises a man from the dead. This is kind of cool because there's a progression in what's happening here that's actually really significant. Starting with wine, going through this process, and ending with resurrecting someone from the dead after he'd been dead for four days and the that's John 11. The next sign is number eight and this is super significant. Number eight is this, it's Jesus, his own resurrection.

This is the eighth sign. Now, the next logical question that you're asking yourself is, Aaron, why in the world does that matter? Well, think about it. For a good Orthodox Jew. Nothing is ever what it is. It's always something else. It's always something more. There's always layers to it. There's always dimension and texture. The number seven for John is so important. It represents two things: number one, it represents completion and let me be clear about this. It doesn't represent perfection. That is a misnomer in the church world. There's no such thing as perfect and like that's not a biblical concept. Perfect, good news. The perfect is not a biblical concept. Now, should we strive for excellence? Sure, but perfection is not a biblical concept. That's not the number seven. Number seven is rooted in completion, but it's also rooted in creation and in fact this is so true that still to this day, all of these numbers in the Orthodox community, they don't teach math by using the numbers like where we would say five plus two equals seven the way that they would teach that is Torah plus the tablets equals creation. That's how they teach math. Even their math concepts are rooted in these biblical concepts -- in seven. The number seven is all about creation. And so, if for John, John 11 the sign of raising the Lazarus from the dead is the completion of one kind of creation, then what does the eighth sign represent? It represents a new creation that is bursting forth right in the midst of this one and resurrection power enables it to happen. This is incredible that God would consider that he loves the world so much that he gave his only son. By the way, that's John 3:16 same gospel that he loved the world so much that he gave his only son that whosoever believes in him

shouldn't perish; but should have eternal life. That, that beauty of resurrection means that you and I have the power to live in the way that we were intended to live. We were never supposed to experience death. We were never supposed to experience pain and sickness and sorrow. We were never supposed to experience those things. And resurrection gives us the power to live into this better way of understanding the world. Now, what a lot of people will say is, well, that means that we...what do we do with viruses? What do we do with hurt? What do we do with sorrow? What do we do with death? What do we do with abuse? What do we do with all of these things? Listen, those things are real and they are of this world, but the invitation to a relationship with Jesus is that the empty tomb tells us that's not how we're supposed to function.

We have a better way to understand how we engage those kinds of things and that while we grieve, first Thessalonians says that “we don't grieve without hope”. Yes, the grief is real. It's not...we're not placating it. We're not trying to pretend like it didn't hurt. That's not where we're going. The truth is we have an eternal perspective on things that makes things look different.

I was working on a sermon for a few weeks from now, today, and one of my favorite passages that came out of that is Isaiah 55 :8-9 where God comes to the people and he says, Hey, my ways, they're not your ways and my thoughts, they're not your

thoughts as far as the seashore is from the stars are my ways, from your ways and my thoughts from your thoughts. The invitation of the resurrection, the invitation of the power that conquers even death is that we understand that the same power is alive and at work in us, and that when we focus on that, it doesn't always make sense. God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts, but it gives us, as we focus on God's eternal perspective, it gives us a better way to deal with all of these things. And so, we live in this super insecure moment in our life right now. We're all in one at different times. We all experience them differently. Sometimes we have things that happened to us or to a family member, and we have hurt and we weep and we grieve over those things. And that's okay. But we don't grieve as people who don't have hope. The power of the resurrection means for us that God is inviting us into a new kind of understanding about how the world is supposed to function.

And he's inviting you and I not just to live in it, but to partner with him and helping that actually play out in the world. Oh, and by the way, everybody everywhere is invited to the table. No matter who you are, no matter where you've been, no matter what you've done. Resurrection says if you're willing to come sit at the table, there's a seat for you.

And so, I have all kinds of implications for this, that I want to give us for this morning as we move forward. Here's implication number one. The resurrection is about Jesus beginning a new

creation. Right in the midst of this one, Jesus is inviting us to partner with him and restoring what sin broke.

Implication number two, the old creation had a death problem. The new creation does not, and I love that. The old creation, the old ways, the old, understand, in the end of it, death is final, but in the new creation, death isn't a problem. It's just the next phase of evolution. I don't mean evolution in the scientific sense. It's the next phase in us taking a hold of our eternal self, the part of us that God has set from the beginning of time to redeem.

Implication number three, the resurrection invites us to let go of death that has stained the old creation and partner with God in restoring what sin is broken. The beautiful thing about resurrection is we don't have to hang onto the pain because those things don't win. We don't have to hang on to all the hardship and the heartache and the miserableness. We don't have to hang onto those things. Yes, they happen, but they don't define us. What defines us is the power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive and at work in my life. That's what begins to take hold of our trajectory, in this world.

Last implication, the resurrection says that death and decay and pain and fear don't have the final word. We have hope beyond the present and our future is secure. So, I'm not begging for a fight, but whatever happens in this world happens, I don't have to get caught up or consumed. I don't have to lose sight of

what's most important. The fact that at the end of the day, God has the final say and there's nothing that we can do. Even dying won't keep us from the love of God. And so, as we sit in these messes that we're in, not just now, but lots of different times in our lives, we find ourselves in a mess, but we don't have to fall apart because we know who wins.

Every week, we, as a church, take communion as a reminder of this moment where Jesus gave his life and then conquered death to make sure that we understood two very important things. Number one, how much God loves us, and number two, that we don't have to get lost in consumed in temporary details because the God who holds the universe together has got our eternal lives very securely in the palm of his hand and, if he can speak matter into existence to create the world, he's got my life handled. That gives me freedom to relax and just enjoy that. I'm the one who Jesus loves and I feel like that's part of what John gets that maybe some of the other apostles didn't get, is that do you know how much Jesus loves me? Do you know how much Jesus loves you? And because of that, do you know how much that we should love each other? Like this invitation to resurrection, this moment of resurrection Sunday is this transformative pivotal point where we can say, because of that moment and because I choose to say yes to everything that comes along with that moment, I don't have to get lost in the details because I know the God who has the world secure. I want us to consider that as we take a minute to prepare our hearts for communion.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and he broke it and he said, this is my body which has given for you. So, whenever you eat this bread, do it in remembrance of me. Jesus has great love for you, transcends even death. Let's remember him this morning. Then in the same way, after the dinner, he took a company said, this cup is the blood of the covenant which is shed for you. So, whenever you drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me. Let's remember him.

Let's pray: God, thank you so much for your relentless determination to say this world as it sits is not all it was meant to be and that you invite us to partner with you in helping it to become more and more and more like what it was supposed to be, in the beginning. God, thank you for the power of resurrection, that even death cannot separate us from your love and from your heart for us as you see us functioning in the world. Lord, help us to be able to rest in the grace that you offer us, knowing that the work that we have to do to get through all these hard things, we do it through the power of your spirit. Thank you, God, for never leaving us and for never bailing out on us. Thank you for being faithful, in your name. Amen. Let's sing one more song.

So as you consider today and this week, what it means to live in the power of resurrection, that power that's at work in you through the Holy spirit, I just pray for you that you begin to experience what it means to truly understand Jesus as your living hope, our hope isn't just for some glad mornin,g that our

hope is for right now, today as well, and that we can have power in our living right now. Even in the midst of the darkest of circumstances. May you have the courage to live into the truth of what the empty tomb means for you and me. Thanks for tuning in. Have a great week.