

John 20 sermon Easter Day

* **III** – The blow up church. Check this out! A blow up church! Inflate your own church in just 10 minutes! Pump it up in your favourite outdoor location! You just lay it out on the ground like a life raft, attach the air hose, and before you know it, you’ve got a church! Inside it has an inflatable organ, altar, pulpit, pews, candles and a gold cross. Even the doors are lined with air-filled air-brushed angels! And it seats up to 60 people! And only around \$5,000 to hire!

Pump it up when you need it, deflate it when you’re finished. A Do It Yourself Church.

But what about a Do It Yourself Jesus? Pump him up when you need him, and deflate him when you don’t. For all those times when we’re looking for a *convenient* version of Jesus. Not one that’s around all the time. Not one that gets in the way of our lives. An instant Jesus. A Jesus that’s just there when we want him to be, when we feel like it? There’s an old song called Plastic Jesus that Paul Newman sings in the movie “Cool Hand Luke”, and it goes like this (I won’t sing it!)

* (Plastic Jesus)

MP3...

There’s about 20 other verses. Here’s 1 more!

Well, I don't care if it rains or freezes,
long as I got my plastic Jesus,
sittin' on the dashboard of my car.
Comes in colors, pink and pleasant,
glows in the dark cause it's iridescent
Take it with you when you travel far.

When I'm in a traffic jam
He don't care if I say "damn"
I can let all my curses roll
Plastic Jesus doesn't hear
'Cause he has a plastic ear
The man who invented plastic saved my soul

The plastic Jesus is a comfort to a lot of people. He appears and disappears. He’s there when you need him and he’s not there when you don’t want him. He’s with you in church, but not when you get home. He hears all your prayers, but not your curses. But the Jesus we read about in John 20 is not a Jesus who appears and disappears like a plastic Jesus. He’s a real Jesus, a flesh and blood Jesus, who appears and *transforms* lives.

* (*Transformation*)

Mary comes to the tomb while it’s still dark on the Sunday morning and sees the stone rolled away. She runs to Simon Peter and the other disciple, who we know as John, and tells them. Peter and John run to the tomb. John looks in and sees the strips of linen his body was wrapped in – lying there empty. Peter runs straight into the tomb and sees the strips of linen and the burial cloth, folded up. The body is gone.

* **Mary** grieves – she weeps because she thinks someone has taken the body away, and she doesn’t know where they’ve put him.

* **Peter**, along with the **other disciples** later on, is afraid and a bit confused. Where is he? What’s happened?

* **John** sees and believes, but still doesn’t quite understand.

* And later on of course we have the famous “**Doubting Thomas**”. When the other disciples tell him “*We have seen the Lord*”, Thomas doubts. He wants to touch the wounds and stick his hand in the wound in Jesus’ side.

Grief, fear, confusion, doubt. But when Jesus appears, he transforms all of that.

Mary and Peter and John and Thomas and the other disciples are looking for a dead Jesus. But what they find is a resurrected, living, flesh and blood Jesus. What they look for is a Jesus who has been overcome by death, but what they find is a Jesus who has overcome death.

And we see the transformation in their lives:

* Verse 16: “Jesus said to her ‘Mary’. She turned towards him and cried out ‘Rabboni’ (which means teacher)”

Mary’s grief turns to joy.

* Verse 19: “On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said ‘Peace be with you!’ After he had said this he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.”

The disciples’ confusion and fear turns to understanding and joy.

* Verse 27: “Then Jesus said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him ‘My Lord and my God!’ ”

Thomas’ doubt turns to belief.

Grief turns to joy, confusion turns to understanding, and doubt turns to belief.

* **Transformation.**

When they see Jesus face to face, they are transformed. They’re no longer looking for a dead Jesus, but are seeing a living one.

* **III** – There’s a story of a Muslim man who became a Christian in Africa. Some of his friends asked him, ‘Why have you become a Christian?’ He answered, ‘Well, it’s like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn’t know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive--which one would you ask for directions?’”

Easter isn’t about a dead man. It’s about a living Lord. We don’t follow a plastic Jesus. We follow a real, living, flesh and blood Jesus.

Let’s go back to verse 15, and asks ourselves the important question that the real Jesus asks Mary:

* v15 - “Who is it that you are looking for?”

“Who is it that **YOU** are looking for?”

If you’re looking for the dead body of Jesus, you won’t find it. If you’re looking for proof and explanations as to why his dead body is missing, you won’t find them – the same way the Jews and the Romans couldn’t find an ounce of evidence that the body was removed or stolen. Despite their efforts to guard the tomb, and their efforts to start rumours that the disciples had stolen the body, the evidence that Jesus is still dead is missing. The actual body is gone from the tomb. He appeared to his disciples. Over 500 other people saw him walking around after his death. He appears with the wounds still in his side, and the nail marks are in his hands and his feet. Thomas could reach out and touch them, Mary could grab onto him. Yet in the same body, Jesus passes through grave clothes and solid walls. This is the **same** Jesus who was crucified, in the **same** body, but a body that has been **transformed, resurrected**.

If we ask ourselves that question” Who is it that we are looking for?”, we may come up with a lot of different answers. But if you’re looking for the **resurrected** Jesus, who has power over death, who was raised from the dead, and is Lord over all the earth, then you WILL find him. The question now is: “What do we do about it?”

* **III** – Car lost – Have you ever been in this situation? You go to one of those shopping centres which has fifteen car park levels, park your car, and after you’ve been shopping for three hours, you finally return to your car with several bags of shopping and find that your car isn’t there! You walk up and down the rows of cars, but you can’t see it anywhere. You start to panic. You look again, and again, but it’s gone. Then you remember. This isn’t the right level. You parked on level five, not level three. Orange, not pink!

Well, what do you do? It's obvious isn't it? You move to the right level. You're looking in the wrong place. And when you realise, you move to the right place.

When Mary stood face to face with Jesus, ***she stopped looking in the empty tomb!*** She stopped grieving.

When the disciples were confronted with Jesus, after he passed through the walls of the locked room, they stopped being afraid and confused.

When Jesus pushed his wounds in Thomas' face and said – "Go on, stick your hand in there", Thomas stopped doubting.

When we come face to face with Jesus, we must respond.

When we've realised we've parked our car on another level, we respond by moving to that level.

When we realise that Jesus is risen, that he is Lord of all, that he has power over life and death, we need to respond by moving to the right level. We can't just go on living as if we know nothing. The information that a man who claims to be God has risen from the dead requires a response. We must either reject him or accept him. And if we accept him, we must continue to respond to him every day. Respond with recognition that he is Lord over death and King over our whole lives. We must respond by allowing him to continue to transform us every day as his children.

The resurrected Jesus can transform us. But we must be prepared to be transformed. We must be prepared to change levels. To let him impact our life. We can ignore all the evidence, and walk away. Or we can be transformed in the way John hopes we will be – verse 30:

** "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*

John wrote these things down so we can believe. And by believing we can share in the eternal life we are offered through Jesus. So we **too** can be resurrected to eternal life. These things are written so we can know the ***real*** Jesus, not a temporary, inflatable version which we've made up for ourselves. These things are written so we can walk with Mary and John and Peter and Thomas and the other disciples. So we can go with them searching for a dead Jesus and find a living Lord. These things are written so that we may BELIEVE and have LIFE through him.

*** "Who are you looking for?"**

A Jesus who pops up and disappears when you feel like it, a plastic Jesus, is a Jesus who can't really care, a Jesus who can't really listen, and a Jesus who isn't really alive.

But the real Jesus IS alive. His body has been transformed into a flesh and blood resurrection body, and he has the power to transform our bodies too. But right now, today, he also has the power to transform our lives. Every day. Because he is with us every day. He's not just in church to worship. He's not just in the car to keep us safe. He's not just with us when we feel afraid or lonely, or are grieving. He's with us every day. And he has the power to transform us every day.

If you believe, will you allow him to transform your life today, and every day? Or will it be just on Sundays?