

Resurrection Sunday (Easter), March 23, 2008
2nd Baptist Church – Lincoln, Robert C. Molby, Interim Pastor

Jesus Lives!

Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18

Acts 10:34-43, Gentiles Hear the Good News

34) Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35) but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36) You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37) That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38) how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39) We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40) but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41) not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him AFTER he rose from the dead. 42) He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43) All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins though his name.

John 20:1-18, The Resurrection of Jesus & Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

1) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2) So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” 3) Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4) The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5) He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6) Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7) and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8) Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9) for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10) Then the disciples returned to their homes.

11) But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12) and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13) They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” 14) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15) Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” 16) Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew. “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because 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 your God.'" 18) Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her."

I've spent a lot of hours this week looking at the texts that related to Resurrection Sunday that are found in the New Testament. Since Easter is celebrated for seven weeks I will be using some of those texts in the weekly Bible Study on Wednesday nights. Or I may be using them in sermons on Sunday morning. The early church celebrated Resurrection Sunday every Sunday, and, in a manner of speaking, the church today could do the same thing for Jesus is alive, not dead! The early church did not speak of Sundays after Easter, like next Sunday would be the 1st Sunday after Easter. Instead they spoke of next Sunday as the 2nd Sunday OF Easter. The Sunday after that would be the 3rd Sunday OF Easter, then the 4th Sunday OF Easter, and so on for seven weeks. We will do the same. Today is Resurrection Sunday or Easter Day.

It is interesting to note the Appearance stories of Jesus after the Resurrection in the Gospels. It is also helpful to keep in mind the dates that the Gospels were written and where they were written from.

Most Bible scholars of today agree that the gospel of Mark was written first; in the early 70's of the first century. Mark wrote from Rome and has only one Appearance Story, chapter 16:1-8. That is the story of the empty tomb with the witnesses being Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome.

Matthew is written in the mid '80's of the first century from Antioch of Syria. He has two Appearance Stories, Matthew 28:1-15 and 16-20.

28:1-15 is the story of the empty tomb with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary making the discovery.

28:16-20 is the meeting in Galilee of the disciples and Jesus on a Mountain where he gives them the Great Commission.

Luke is written from the mid to late '80's of the first century and probably from Caesarea; he also has two Appearance Stories, Luke 24:1-12 and 24:13-53.

24:1-12 is the empty tomb with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women with them.

24:13-52 is the walk to Emmaus, appearing to the disciples and his ascension – all on Easter Sunday.

But John has four appearance stories spread over two chapters, 20 and 21. John is written near the end of the 1st century, the upper '90's AD.

20:1-18, the empty tomb story with Mary Magdalene the only woman present.

20:19-23, Jesus' appearance to the disciples and the gift of the Holy Spirit without Thomas present.

20:24-29, Jesus' appearance a week later to the disciples with Thomas present.

Then the gospel seems to end with 20:30-31 where John tells the purpose of his writing but then there is added another appearance story.

21:1-25 tells of the disciples fishing and Jesus appears on the shore. He calls to them and suggests that they put their nets down on the other side of the boat. They do and catch so many fish that it is hard to bring them in. Peter jumps in the water and goes ashore to meet Jesus. After the breakfast that Jesus has prepared he has a conversation with Peter about love. He asks Peter three times if he loves him and each time Peter says that he does. Jesus replies by saying, "Feed my sheep," "Tend my sheep" and "Feed my sheep." Then he tells Peter twice to "Follow him" as he has followed God and suggests that he will suffer death even as he did.

- The Gospel Easter Stories Together; two themes sum up the central meanings of Easter.
 - *Jesus lives* is the first phrase.
 - ✚ He continues to be experienced after his death but in a radically new way. No longer is he a figure of flesh and blood confined to time and space but he can enter locked rooms, journey with followers without being recognized, experienced in both Galilee and Jerusalem, vanish in the moment of recognition but abide with his followers always, "to the end of the age."
 - ✚ The appearance stories fulfill the promise in Mark: "You will see him." They underscore the empty tomb: Jesus is not among the dead but among the living. He is a figure of the present, not simply of the past. The presence his followers had known before the crucifixion continues to be experienced after the crucifixion.
 - ✚ The truth of the statement "Jesus lives," is not confined to a brief series of experiences that occurred two thousand years ago for a period of forty days (of which we cannot be clear since Luke writes of two ascensions), between resurrection and ascension. "Jesus lives" has been the experience of Christians through the centuries. And that experience is not essential. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" is the promise of Scripture. On the other hand some Christians have experienced Jesus as a living reality. Jesus continues to be and to operate.