

## Church of the Nazarene

### Finding Jesus

Text: John 20:1-18 (NIV) But any version will do...

Mary Magdalene was the first to discover that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb. She had gone there with the other women very early on Sunday morning. They went there to finish the embalming process on the body of Jesus. When she arrived at the tomb, she saw that massive stone had been rolled away from the opening.

The tomb was wide open. Her first thoughts were, "Grave Robbers", someone had stolen the body of Jesus. Those were the first anguished words she shared when she ran back to tell the disciples, Peter and John. She proclaimed to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!" Mary was already grief stricken, now this?

First they crucified her Lord, now she was having a panic attack. His body was gone. Her Jesus was missing. Mary's Jesus had a body and she wasn't going to rest from her running until she found His body.

Now, Peter and John both ran to the tomb. John was a faster runner and arrived first. He takes a tentative peek inside the tomb. He sees the strips of burial linens but does not enter. Peter is braver than John, never one to hesitate with anything. He heads directly into the tomb. He sees the strips of burial linens also.

However, something is strange here, out of the ordinary. Everything is neat and in order. The head wrapping cloth is folded up by itself, separate from the linen strips. Whoever did this wasn't in much of a hurry. The sheets have been folded, the bed is made, hardly the work of grave robbers.

John finally winds up enough courage to go inside the tomb to take a better look for himself. And he records this solemn sentence, "He saw and he believed"

When John saw the empty tomb and the folded linens, what did he believe? He did not believe because of what he saw. No, he believed the words of Jesus, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" <John 2:19>. It was not just that John had seen something. Rather, it was what he had heard earlier. The words of Jesus. Now he believed.

Seeing is not believing, and believing is not seeing. Seeing things places the evidence before our eyes. Believing in Jesus is having trust in the heart that — Jesus Is True To His Word. Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:17: "... faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

Faith connects what is seen to the crucified and risen body of Jesus. It is quite possible to see and not believe. The Pharisees saw the miracles Jesus performed, but they did not believe. Peter saw the same things John did, but he did not believe. Mary saw not only the folded linens, she also saw two bright angels in the tomb. She even saw Jesus with her own two eyes, and still she did not believe. It wasn't until Jesus spoke to her by name "Mary" <Vs16> that she heard His Voice, and then she believed.

Later that same week even Thomas said, "Unless I see His wounds and touch them, I will not believe." Afterward in John 20:27-28 When 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." Then upon hearing the words of Christ, Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

It was not what these people saw that caused them to believe. It was the words, which Jesus had spoken that convinced them.

It is possible to not see and yet believe. What about us, you and me? We did not have the opportunity to see any of these things. In Galatians 3:2, Paul asked, "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" And said in Romans 10:17, "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

What about Jesus himself, what did He say? He said in John 20:29: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This applies to you and me. John did not direct our attention to the burial cloths, or the open tomb. Rather to the word of Christ.

We do not see, we cannot see. There is nothing for us to see. We could take a field trip to Israel and see what some believe to be the tomb where Jesus was buried. But could we be sure that we were looking at the right one? And what would we see even if we were sure? Sometimes we imagine that it must have been easier to believe all this back then, at the time of Mary, Peter, and John and the first disciples, than it is for us

to believe it today. They were eye-witnesses to Jesus' death and resurrection. They saw all of this with their own eyes. How we long for that opportunity—just a peek into the open, empty tomb, a glance at the carefully folded burial cloths, or a glimpse of a bright angel or two. Or maybe, how about a look at the face of the resurrected Christ. Would be easier for us to believe if only we could see?

Scripture tells us differently. Seeing is not necessarily believing. Mary saw Jesus with her own eyes. At first she thought He was the gardener. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus saw Jesus. They walked and talked with Him for seven miles, but their eyes did not recognize Him, until he broke the bread at the table with them and spoke.

The eleven disciples saw the risen Jesus on the mountain in Galilee. They worshipped and doubted at the same time. Seeing is not believing. In fact, seeing often frustrates the way of believing when we trust our eyes instead of Jesus' Word.

Only the word of Jesus Christ can work faith in our hearts so we may believe. Led by our eyes we will be misled to look for Jesus in all the wrong places: in our hearts, in the beauty of a sunrise, in the grandeur of lofty mountains, in our emotions, in our thoughts and meditations, in our devotions, in our works, or, in our learning and wisdom—instead of in the Body of Christ

Following our eyes we will wind-up running around like Mary and the disciples, racing from one tomb to the next, from one religion to the next, from one church to the next, from one preacher to the next, all the while chanting Mary's ode of despair and confusion:

"They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they have put Him."

Following our eyes we will be led to a Jesus other than the Jesus who hung on the cross for our sins. Words of Jesus Christ will strengthen our faith and His word is loyal and true. Listen to Jesus. His WORD is truth and life. John 10:14, 27 says: "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

Peter, John and Mary had found their Jesus. Or more precisely, Jesus had found them. We don't seek Him, He seeks us and finds us. Yes we must listen with our eyes wide open. He will be present wherever His Words are heard. Jesus Christ Has Risen. Trust Jesus, His WORD is your life.

-Rev. Duane Jones

## First Christian Church

### Setting The Captives Free

This morning as I opened the paper, a headline of "Good News" looked back at me. I said a prayer of thanks for the POW's rescued in Iraq. I thought of those soldiers who have given their life to free Iraq from oppression and my mind turned toward Easter.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is talking to the crowd in the 12th chapter and says to them, "The Son of Man must be lifted up." The crowd naturally responds, "Who is this Son of Man?" And Jesus replies, "You will only have the light for a little while longer, walk in the light before the darkness overtakes you." Jesus is speaking of himself and what is about to take place in his immediate future. I'm sure some of you have faced or will face the same thing at some point in your life, DEATH. His was death on a cross.

Later as he is speaking with his disciples he tells them that he must go away so in the future they will have a place prepared for them when they face the future we all face. Peter speaks up and says, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay my life down for you." Of course Jesus, knowing Peter's heart, asks, "Will you really?" The thought that comes to my mind is that even if he had, would it have made a difference? No amount of peace marches would have pulled the fingers of Saddam Hussein from around the country of Iraq's throat—it took our young men and women in the military to free them from oppression and give them hope for a new life.

It is a dark hour anytime we go to war, but some battles must be faced. As we approach Easter understand that Jesus faced a dark hour and battle that had to be faced, not for himself, but for us. That first Easter morning the ladies made their way toward the tomb to prepare the body and discovered the first rays of hope breaking through. As we celebrate this Easter let us praise God for the answer to our prayers with the release of the captive POW's and also with the release of our captive hearts with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is risen, indeed!

-Pastor Andrew Johnson

## St. Patrick and St. William's Catholic Churches Victory of Light Over Darkness

Early on that first Easter Sunday morning some of His followers discovered that the tomb, in which Jesus had been buried, was empty. There were some women, there were Peter and John, there was Mary Magdalene. They had witnessed his death with their own eyes. Now the tomb was empty. They began to believe that He was alive. They came to recognize the truth of what Jesus had predicted about Himself. Now, He was truly risen from the dead.

As the news spread it is only natural that there was some confusion. Nothing like this had ever happened before. At first, some were puzzled. Some doubted. Some, like Thomas, simply refused to believe. They really had to consider the event as it was reported to them. Then, once they had the encounter with the risen Jesus, belief began to grow stronger. Their eagerness began to rise. Their Friend had overcome death. Even though their faith and eagerness grew, yet some fear lingered in their hearts. They were not yet ready to go out and face the hardships of life. In due time that fear was overcome, and then they went forth and challenged the world.

Even without the message and truth of Easter, the account of the life of Jesus would still be inspiring. Yet it would only be like a candle that was eventually extinguished. Darkness would have had the last word. However, because of the resurrection, darkness will never have the last word. Consequently, St. John tells us in the first chapter of his gospel: "The light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it." And at another time Jesus would claim to be the light of the world.

As we celebrate this Easter, we are challenged to live by His truths, challenged to live in the light of His life. Like the disciples, we also may have some fear in or hearts, but He will give us the courage we need when we have faith in Him. Let us live in His light.

-Fr. Gerry Condon

## Ione United Church of Christ Five Easter Lessons

The story is told briefly in the Paul's letter to the Phillipians: "He humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

What lessons can we draw from the Easter story?

- 1) God's essential attitude toward each of us, and toward the world, is love.
- 2) Death is not the final word. Rather than being defined by our fear of death, we may live according to God's promise of life.
- 3) God breaks the power of sin. Evil can only be overcome by good, hatred can only be overcome by forgiveness, and hatred and rejection can only be overcome by love. Our own goodness, mercy, and caring are important, but these cannot undo the damage done, or restore us so that we can be blameless before God. In Jesus Christ, God has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
- 4) Jesus is worth our attention. We need to listen not only to what is said about him, but to what he said to his followers, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your mind, and all your strength, and all your soul; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." We need to take the time and effort to study the scriptures, and listen to good preaching, so that our hearts and minds may know Jesus as clearly and accurately as possible. Our world desperately needs courageous Christians who will.
5. Jesus is still available to us. We may still turn to Jesus in prayer. The Spirit of Christ is still at work among us. We may still place our trust in Jesus, in life and death. We may still follow Him in his way.

The good news is not only in the past tense, not just that Jesus died and then he lived again. The Gospel is forever in the present: Jesus lives!

Alleluia!

-Reverend Paul Clay, Pastor

## Heppner Christian plans Easter service

The Heppner Christian Church invites everyone to attend worship on Easter Sunday, April 20. Breakfast is planned for 9:30 a.m., with worship at 10:30 a.m.

"Come as you are and meet Jesus," says Pastor Andrew Johnson, who promises "awesome worship" and a "relevant message."

## Son Rise service Easter morning

A "Son Rise" service, sponsored by the South Morrow County Ministerial Association, will be held Easter, April 20, at 7 a.m. at the Morrow County Fairgrounds.

Breakfast, sponsored by the Church of the Nazarene, will be held at the church at 335 Gilmore in Heppner. Everyone is invited to attend.

## Holy Week events set at St. Patrick's

On Holy Thursday, April 17, Even Mass of the Lord's Supper, a solemn commemoration of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, will begin at 7 p.m. at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Heppner.

On Good Friday, April 18, Stations of the Cross will be at 12:05 p.m., with a solemn commemoration of the Lord's suffering and death planned for 7 p.m.

An Easter Mass of the Resurrection will be held at 11 a.m. on Easter Sunday, April 20.

## St. William's plans Holy Week services

On Good Friday, April 18, Stations of the Cross has been planned at St. William Catholic Church in Ione beginning at 5 p.m.

Easter Mass of the Resurrection will be at 8:45 a.m. on Easter Sunday, April 20.

Caravelle...



by Bulova



**Heppner Christian Church  
Invites You To  
Come Worship With Us  
on Easter, April 20th**

**Awesome Worship,  
Relevant Message,  
Friendly People, Child Care**

**9:30 a.m. breakfast  
10:30 a.m. worship**

**"Come As You Are and Meet Jesus"**