

# JOHN

## Chapter 20

### *The Resurrection*

**20** 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. **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** So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. **4** Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, **7** and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. **8** Then the other disciple, who had 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 went back to their homes.

**20:1-18** In this text we see the resurrection of our Lord through the eyes of three key eyewitnesses. Our text contains an intriguing variation of words for seeing and perceiving which we will note as the drama unfolds. Mary Magdalene and Peter are perplexed by the puzzling scene they find at the empty tomb. John (the most probable identity of “the other disciple”) sees the same details but concludes that Jesus has risen from the dead. As we re-examine with John the puzzling details that he so carefully preserved for us, we are led with him to discover astounding truths that have radically changed the hearts and lives of people for 2,000 years. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

The day for commemorating Mary Magdalene has been observed by both the Eastern and Western churches since the twelfth century. However, Lutherans and Episcopalians have marked this day only since the late 1970s. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

From the Bible, we know Mary Magdalene to be one of the Galilean women who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, accompanied his body to the tomb, and went to the grave “on the first day of the week” (Jn 20:1) with burial spices to put on Jesus' body (Mk 16:1). Mary is also the first person to see Jesus risen from the dead (Jn 20:11–18). This Mary is mentioned only one other place in the Gospels. Lk 8:1–3 tells us that Jesus had cast out seven demons from her and that she was one of several women who contributed “out of their own means” to support Jesus and his disciples. Mary is also unique among biblical women in that she is known to us not by her relationship to her family, but by the location of her hometown, Magdala. Everything else we can say about Mary is pure speculation. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

And what speculation there has been about Mary Magdalene! There has been a sentimental effort on the part of many writers and theologians to paint her as the “Bad Mary” in contrast with the “Good Mary,” who is the mother of our Lord. Mary Magdalene has emerged as the “female lead” in countless Passion plays. She is the woman uncertain how to express her romantic feelings in *Jesus Christ Superstar* as she sings “I Don't Know How to Love Him.” She is the prostitute whom Jesus attempts to reform in Nikos Kazantzakis' controversial novel *The Last Temptation of*

*Christ*. Others have confused Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Still others have attempted to identify her as the repentant woman who anointed Jesus' feet with perfume from an alabaster jar while he was eating at a Pharisee's house (see Lk 7:36–50). The most interesting piece of speculation about Mary is a 1977 article written by James T. Baker in *Christian Century* titled “The Red-Haired Saint.” Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

Both the Gnostics of the latter first and second century and spiritism of the postmodern world believe material is an earthly evil and spiritual is a godly good. John's Gospel account challenges the hearer to see beyond the material to the presence of the spiritual. God became flesh and dwelt among us (ch 1). The spirit is in the water (ch 3). Those who eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood have life (ch 6). According to Byzantine art water and blood flow from Jesus' side (ch 19) as the witness of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In ch 20 Jesus gives the Office of the Keys to the church. Then Jesus tells Thomas, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (v 29). Our text challenges us to see God working through the person of Jesus, who gives us life now and forever with him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

Because it specifically describes the Sunday after Easter (“Eight days later,” v 26), this text is, quite appropriately, the Gospel for this week in all three lectionary years. This is fortunate, because this text surely offers more material than could be exhausted by any single theme. The Office of the Keys (vv 21–23), the Thomas story (vv 24–29), the matter of seeing and believing (vv 20, 25, 29), the summary statement of John's Gospel (vv 30–31), all are potentially full sermons. One element that seems to unify the parts of the text, though, is the word *peace*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

**20:1** *first day* – The first day of the week,” according to Christian reckoning; for with Christians all days are Sabbaths and none especially holy, excepting inasmuch as they are sanctified and hallowed by the Word of God and prayer. This was on Sunday, the third day after Jesus had been laid into the grave. (Kretzmann)

The Jews had no names for the weekdays and therefore designated them with reference to the Sabbath. (Lenski)

“Early on the first day of the week.” John here retains the Jewish way of numbering days of the week, not *Sunday*, but the first day after the Sabbath. It was while it was still dark that Mary Magdalene was the first to see that “the stone had been removed from the [tomb].” Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

*while it was still dark*. Mark says it was “just after sunrise” (Mk 16:2). Perhaps the women came in groups, with Mary Magdalene coming very early. Or John may refer to the time of leaving home, Mark to that of arrival at the tomb. (CSB)

*Tēi de miāi tōn sabbatōn . . . prōi*, “Early on the first day of the week”: The plural *sabbatōn* is used in singular meaning for both Sabbath and week. John's account does not mention the last Sabbath. However, the accounts according to Matthew (28:1), Mark (16:1–3), and Luke (23:56–24:1) mention the last Sabbath. The unanimity of the wording in the four canonical Gospels as to this day points to the significance of the first day of the week as the new Sabbath (Arthur A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast* [Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1993] 39–40). We are to look for something new to happen. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

Various factors may have motivated early departure for the tomb: a determination to act decisively; the desire to work on Jesus' body as soon as possible, in the morning hours while it was still cool; and the desire to leave the city before the Passover crowds began bustling about. (TLSB)

On this morning several women from the circle of the disciples started out early for the grave of the Lord. Of these the evangelist John mentions Mary Magdalene especially, the story of the others having been narrated by the earlier gospel-writers. It was so early that the shadows of dawn were still lying over the country, though the light was breaking. (Kretzmann)

*Mary Magdalene.* "Mary Magdalene": In Matthew two women go to the tomb; in Mark three women; and in Luke, an infinite number go to the tomb. Here we see only one. We may gather that Mary Magdalene went with the women in each scenario but was the one who turned back first in shock to tell the disciples Jesus' body was gone. She is the main person of this narrative. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

Mary Magdalene is the first eyewitness. She "sees" (from *blepō*, a vivid historical present, with the connotation "to notice, take note") the details at the empty tomb, not yet with the eyes of faith, but with the eyes of puzzlement and horror. Her worst fear has been realized: they (the Romans or Jews?) have stolen her Lord's body! After racing back to Jerusalem, she shares her alarming discovery with Peter and John: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him" (v 2). Mary suspects the enemies of Jesus or even grave robbers have been at work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Perhaps Mary had become separated from the other women. (TLSB)

*stone had been taken away* – The door of this tomb was closed by a great circular slab of stone, rolled into a groove in front of the door, fitting tightly against the face of the cliff into which the tomb had been hewn. Like a wheel this slab could be rolled to the left in its groove, thus exposing the door. The groove slanted so that its lowest point was in front of the opening of the tomb. Now what the women saw was not that this circular slab had been wheeled to the left in its groove but had been thrown out of its groove, away from the opening, and was lying flat on the ground. The evidence of violence was beyond question. (Lenski)

"The stone had been removed from the entrance": In 19:38–42 there is no mention of the closing of the tomb with a stone. The hearers of the day, like us today, are well aware from Matthew and Mark that the tomb was sealed with a stone. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

The verb describing that the stone "had been removed," from *airō*, "(lift up and) carry away, remove," (*BAGD* p. 24, 3.) is the same one Jesus used in his command to roll the stone away from Lazarus' tomb (Jn 11:39). Mt 28:2 tells how an angel had rolled it away. This type of stone was flat and circular, several feet in diameter and usually weighing hundreds of pounds. It rested in a groove in front of the tomb's opening. To roll it away was no easy feat (Mk 16:3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

**20:2 ran** – Running was a sign of distress. (TLSB)

When Mary Magdalene came within sight of the tomb of the Master and saw that the heavy stone which fitted into the groove before the opening, and served in a way to lock the entrance, had

been taken away, she waited for nothing more. Mary ran back to the city as quickly as she could. (Kretzmann)

*to Simon Peter.* Despite his denials, Peter was still the leading figure among the disciples. (CSB)

This is first mention of Peter since the denial. (TLSB)

*the one Jesus loved.* “the other disciple, the one Jesus loved”: seems to be John’s signature on the account. Rather than boasting, this is a way to authenticate that the one writing this to you is also the one who was an eyewitness (see 21:24–25). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

John’s favorite self-description is “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20). This stresses Christ’s grace, rather than any merit on John’s part, and avoids any bold claims about his devotion to Christ of the sort that Peter made, but did not live up to (Mt 26:33, 35). It also is a description each of us can apply to ourselves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Whether by design or by accident, she struck Simon Peter and John first of all. (Kretzmann)

*they have taken the Lord* – Hastily she poured into their ears what she had seen, as well as her deductions therefrom; for she seems to have been certain that the sepulcher had been violated by some one, perhaps even by the authorities, who had reasons of their own for removing the body of the hated Nazarene. Hastily she states her message: They have carried away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have placed Him. She was not alone in her anxious fears, the other women agreeing with her. (Kretzmann)

“They have taken the Lord”: Mary naturally looks for a human explanation for this divine occurrence. “We do not know where they have put him!” With one exception all buried bodies are still somewhere. They do not come back to life. At this moment Mary cannot see beyond the death and burial of Jesus of Nazareth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

Mary was the first to run to the disciples with the news, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” Why did Mary use a first-person plural pronoun? Were there other women present (as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke), or was Mary merely speaking while in an emotional state? Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

*we.* Indicates that there were others with Mary (see Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1; Lk 24:10), though John does not identify them. (CSB)

*have laid him.* Mary had no thought of resurrection. (CSB)

We here see the result of following one’s own conjectures and surmises instead of paying strict attention to the Word of the Lord. If all the disciples, men and women, had closely remembered the prophecies of the Lord concerning His Passion and resurrection, they would have saved themselves many a bitter heartache. Christians must learn ever better to search the Scriptures, to turn to the Word in all the various vicissitudes of life, instead of following their own ideas and feelings. (Kretzmann)

**20:3** *Peter...other disciple* – The message of Mary Magdalene stirred both Peter and John to quick action. They immediately made up their minds to find out the truth of this most astounding matter. (Kretzmann)

**20:4** *outran* – An explanation is not given, though some have surmised that John was younger (he lived until the end of the first century). (TLSB)

At first the two disciples ran together, side by side. Soon, however, the younger and nimbler John outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first. (Kretzmann)

Both verbs of running are from *trechō* (whose aorist forms are supplied from *dramō*). The verb is also used of foot-races in the stadium (1 Cor 9:24). John outran Peter probably because he was younger. It does not imply precedence over Peter, since Peter retained his position of prominence among the apostles (Mk 16:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

**20:5-7** When John arrived he “bent over” (from *parakuptō*, “to stoop over in order to peer into or to see something better,” also in v 11) and looked in, but he did not go in. Perhaps he was politely waiting for Peter, who was still leader among the disciples, or maybe John was simply reluctant to enter the place of death. What he did see was a puzzling detail that he would later examine more closely. The linen burial cloths were there, but the body they had covered was not. Furthermore, they were not lying in disarray, as one would have expected if they had been ripped off as the body was hurriedly stolen away. Instead, they were neatly folded up, much as we carefully make a bed after we are done sleeping. What grave-robber would have done that? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

When the impetuous Peter arrived, he did not hesitate to enter the tomb. He also “saw” (from *theōreō* “be a spectator, observe, perceive”), the linen cloths lying there, as well as the “burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head.” But Peter did not seem to grasp significance of the perplexing details, including the fact that “the cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.” The cloth (*soudarion*) which had covered the face of Jesus was a face cloth, perhaps the size of a small towel or large napkin, which was placed over the face or wrapped around the head. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

John carefully notes the contrasting details between the raising of Jesus and the raising of Lazarus, to which he was also an eyewitness. Lazarus had come out of the tomb still wrapped in and confined by the burial cloths, including the *soudarion*, and so Jesus ordered them to untie him (Jn 11:44). With Jesus, it was entirely different. John quickly concluded, it appears, that the body could not have been stolen, and there would have been no reason to unwrap the body—unless he was alive again, like Lazarus! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

John does not explain the mysterious detail of the folded cloths. Did the angel who rolled away the stone untie Jesus and fold the cloths? Did Jesus unwrap himself? Did the body of Jesus pass through the cloths in a supernatural way? We are not told, and such questions become trivial and irrelevant in light of the overwhelming fact of the resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

**20:5** *stooping* – The Greek *parakupto* means bending for the sake of looking, with a focus on satisfying one’s curiosity. (TLSB)

But here he hesitated. He may have had some presentiment of the miracles which the disciples were soon to witness. He could not quite make up his mind to investigate more closely. He merely stooped down and peered into the semidarkness of the tomb. He could make out the linen grave-cloths with which the body had been wound, but nothing more; and he could not make up his mind to enter. (Kretzmann)

**20:6-7** “The strips of linen lying there . . . the burial cloth . . . was folded up by itself, separate from the linen”: In contrast to the raising of Lazarus, who had to have grave clothes taken off after being raised from the dead, Jesus’ body disappeared, passed through, the grave clothes and left them lying there. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

**20:6** *Peter...went into...saw* – But when impulsive Peter came along, there was not a moment's hesitation. He went into the tomb; he viewed closely the grave cloths, assuring himself of their identity. (Kretzmann)

*linen cloths* – No human being wrapped round and round with bands like this could possibly slip out of them without greatly disturbing them. They would have to be unwound, or cut through, or cut and stripped off. (Lenski)

**20:7** *cloth...had been on Jesus head* – Probably would be wrapped under the chin and over the top of the head to keep the corpse’s mouth from opening. (TLSB)

*folded up.* An orderly arrangement, not in disarray, as would have resulted from a grave robbery. (CSB)

Detail indicating that the body had not been stolen. Grace robbers would not unwrap the body, leaving behind the valuable line and spices, nor would they neatly fold these items before leaving the tomb. (TLSB)

All these significant discoveries he undoubtedly communicated to John, until the latter finally was induced also to enter and to see the evidence presented in the tomb with his own eyes. It was certainly surprising enough to find all the cloths laid aside with such apparent care, with no sign of haste, as would have been the case had the sepulcher been violated and the body stolen. (Kretzmann)

**>Why Did Jesus Fold the Napkin?**

>

**>This is one I can honestly say I have never seen circulating in the e-mails so; I'll  
>start it, if it touches you and you want to forward it.**

>

**>Why did Jesus fold the linen burial cloth after His resurrection? I never noticed  
>this....**

>

**>The Gospel of John (20:7) tells us that the napkin, which was placed over the  
>face of Jesus, was not just thrown aside like the grave clothes..**

>

**>The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded,  
>and was placed at the head of that stony coffin.**

- >
- >Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb
  - >and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.
- >
- >She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved..
- >She said, 'They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where
  - >they have put him!'
- >
- >Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple out ran
  - >Peter and got there first. He stopped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying
    - >there, but he didn't go in.
- >
- >Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings
  - >lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying
    - >to the side.
- >
- >Was that important? Absolutely!
- >Is it really significant? Yes!
- >
- >In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand
  - >a little bit about Hebrew tradition of that day.
    - >The folded napkin
      - >had to do with the Master and Servant, and every
        - >Jewish boy knew
          - >this tradition.
- >
- >When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was
  - >exactly the way the master wanted it.
- >
- >The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out
  - >of sight, until the master had finished eating, and the servant would not dare touch
    - >that table, until the master was finished.
- >
- >Now if the master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers,
  - >his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the
    - >table.
- >
- >The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded
  - >napkin meant, "I'm finished."
- >
- >But if the master got up from the table, and folded his napkin, and laid it beside
  - >his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because.....
- >
- >The folded napkin meant,
  - >"I'm coming back."

**20:8** *He saw and believed.* Cf. v. 29. John did not say what he believed, but it must have been that Jesus was resurrected. (CSB)

“He saw and believed”: *episteusen* is the word for saving faith. It is implied that Peter had not been convinced of the resurrection by the sight of the empty tomb and the grave clothes. However, we have a faith that is based on nothing, an empty tomb. Because it is empty we look beyond to God acting above the human limitations and expectations to the fullness of life now and forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

When John entered the tomb, he “saw” (from *eidon*, “to see, perceive by sight,” which is used as the aorist of *horaō*), and he “believed” (from *pisteuō*, the usual verb for having Christian faith and trust). This key phrase implies that although Peter had seen the same details, he had not been convinced yet that Jesus had truly risen from the grave. But neither had John merely made a brilliant deduction as a sleuth or detective. His was a Spirit-inspired response of faith, “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb 11:1); in this case, it was Christ’s body that he did not see, but he would see his risen Lord later. Here we have a bridge to next Sunday’s Gospel, for John, like us, is numbered among those of whom it can be said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (v 29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Though John did not see the resurrected Jesus, he believed after seeing the signs of His resurrection in the empty tomb. [Contrast this with Thomas’s doubt (v. 25). However, John did not yet understand (v. 9)] (TLSB)

What John saw drove him to one conclusion: Jesus Himself had laid aside these wrappings; He had risen; He had returned to life. (Kretzmann)

**20:9** *did not understand* - “They still did not understand the Scripture”: The disciple’s faith came from what he had seen at the tomb. Neither of them understood Jesus’ passion predictions about leaving (John 14; Lk 9:22–27, 43b–45; 18:31–39; Mk 8:31–32; 9:30–32; 10:32–34; Mt 16:21–28; 17:22–23; 20:17–19). The recognition that they were prophesied in the Old Testament seems also to be missing. We, of course, have this empty tomb, made more certain in our understanding of the prophets foretelling the whole passion of the Christ. If the text ends here, we have enough to see the struggle of Mary, Peter, and John to look beyond the limits of life and death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

Life continues beyond the tomb, so we will experience life outside the tomb. More than that, because Jesus lives beyond the tomb, life begins for us today with new value and new meaning. We do not have to find meaning based on our experience between birth and death. Life has its meaning living in relationship to a living, eternal Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

Only later, looking back, did John, Peter, and the other disciples recognize the OT prophecies of the Messiah’s resurrection, such as Hos 6:2; Ps 16:10; Is 53:9–11; Jonah; as well as the words of Jesus himself after he cleansed the temple (Jn 2:19–22). They had not yet grasped the central truth of Scripture that it was necessary for the Messiah to die and rise again for the salvation of all humanity. Jesus had to explain it to them (Lk 24:45–46). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 2)

Though Jesus had promised His own death and resurrection and supported these promises from Scripture, the disciples had not understood the true meaning of the promises (e.g., Is 53:10–12; Hos 6:2) (TLSB)

And this conviction forced itself upon John, although he, with the other apostles, at that time did not have the proper understanding of the Scriptures concerning the resurrection of the Master, namely, that it was a necessary part of the scheme of redemption, that it must happen to complete the work for the salvation of mankind. And the same facts, as related by these faithful witnesses, without the slightest indication of having connived to cheat the world: the empty tomb, the careful order in the grave, the absence of any and every indication of robbery, should convince any reasonable critic of the resurrection of Jesus. That is the faith of the Christians; upon the miracle of Christ's resurrection they place their own hope of salvation. The grave had to give up its prey. The victory of the grave is turned into defeat; the sting of death is taken away. Ours is the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Kretzmann)

*Scripture.* First they came to know of the resurrection through what they saw in the tomb; only later did they see it in Scripture. It is obvious they did not make up a story of resurrection to fit a preconceived understanding of Scriptural prophecy. (CSB)

*must rise.* It was in Scripture and thus the will of God. (CSB)

**20:10** *homes* – Where they were staying while in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*pros autous* is translated “to their homes.” Possibly these words mean “they went again to themselves,” i.e., went back to the other disciples. They do not yet live outside the tomb. They go back to life as they understood it before the empty tomb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

For the time being, at least, John was satisfied in his own mind that his Master had returned to life. And the time was coming when the last remnant of spiritual darkness was to be removed from his mind. Meanwhile the two disciples went away more slowly and thoughtfully from the grave than they had come. They returned home or to their place of lodging in Jerusalem. Note: Reasonable proofs of the resurrection of Christ can never give the heart the firm faith which is necessary for salvation. Under circumstances it is a good thing to be able to stop the mouths of the gainsayers by showing them the foolishness of their position; but the most convincing arguments are the statements of Scriptures themselves. (Kretzmann)

**20:1–10** The first witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection see an empty tomb bearing all the signs of the fulfillment of the OT promises and Jesus’ own declaration that He “must rise from the dead” (v 9). The disciples were slow to believe, just as we, too, can be of little faith. Yet, rejoice! For our sakes, Christ grants us His Spirit to work faith in us. Christ robbed the grave of death, confirming His own words, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25). • Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia! (TLSB)

*Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*

**11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one 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 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” 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 Aramaic, **“Rabboni!”** (which means Teacher). 17 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 your God.’”** 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, **“I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.**

**20;10-18** The extended text with Mary Magdalene helps us understand our life beyond the tomb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

**20:11-14** Mary also remains in the reality of life as we know it before the empty tomb. She sees the grave clothes; she sees a missing body. The two angels speak to Mary. She replies to them as she would speak to merchants in the market. Since Mary is not expecting to see Jesus alive outside the tomb, she does not see Jesus as the risen Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

**20:11** *Mary.* Perhaps Jesus appeared first to Mary because she needed him most at that time. (CSB)

When Peter and John had run to the tomb in such great haste, Mary had followed more slowly, arriving in the garden only after Peter and John had again left. (Kretzmann)

*weeping.* As in 11:33, it means “wailing,” a loud expression of grief. (CSB)

John tells us twice that Mary was *klaiō*, “weeping.” She probably did not see “that it was Jesus,” because her eyes were filled with tears. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

Her mind was still filled with her first conclusion, namely, that the removal of her Lord's body was due to grave robbery. And she had given way to a fit of unrestrained weeping. She still remained outside the tomb in helpless and hopeless despair. Incidentally, however, she is prompted to look whether the body of the Lord is really gone from the sepulcher, or whether the whole matter is only a kind of bad dream. (Kretzmann)

*stooped* – So she stoops forward to look at the place where the men had laid the Lord in her own presence, with her tears still flowing freely. The love which Mary Magdalene had for the Master is a fitting example for the believers of all times. This Mary is a fine, beautiful type and an excellent example of all those that cling to Christ, that their hearts should burn in pure and true love toward Christ. (Kretzmann)

**20:12** *two angels.* Matthew has one angel (Mt 28:2), Mark a young man (Mk 16:5) and Luke two men who were angels (Lk 24:4, 23). (CSB)

Visitors from heaven sometimes appeared in shining white garments (cf Lk 9:29-31; Ac 1:10) (TLSB)

For she forgets everything, both her feminine modesty and person, is not bothered by the fact that she sees the two angels before her, does not remember that Annas and Caiaphas are filled with hostile wrath. In brief, she sees nothing, she hears nothing but Christ only. If she could only find the dead Christ; then she would be perfectly satisfied. And the evangelist for that reason has described it so diligently in order that we, who preach and hear it, may also, according to this example, gain desire, love, and eagerness toward Christ the Lord. When Mary stooped forward to

look into the grave, she saw two angels in white garments sitting there, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of the Lord had been lying. They were sitting there with a purpose; they were ready to give information concerning the truth of the resurrection to all that sought it. They may have been the same angels that had been present at the earlier hour, or they may have been new messengers of the Lord, become visible for the occasion. It seems that there must have been almost a friendly rivalry in heaven for the privilege of being the guardians of the grave of the Lord, just as at the birth of Christ the multitude of the heavenly host came down to the fields of Bethlehem to sing their anthem of praise. (Kretzmann)

**20:13** *why are you weeping* – Sympathetically the angels asked Mary: Woman, why weepst thou? Their purpose was to open her eyes that she might see and hear the truth. But Mary's grief is too deep to notice the presence of glorious comfort. She was surrounded with evidences of her Lord's resurrection which should have caused her to leap and shout with joy, and here she gives the angels the hopeless answer: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have placed Him. The case of Mary is repeated in the experience of Christians the world over. If they are visited with any real or supposed trouble, they are immediately so engrossed with their grief that they fail to see the multitude of evidences all about them that Jesus lives, and that therefore nothing can really matter. To trust unflinchingly in the resurrected Savior, that must be the aim and the steady endeavor of the believers in the Lord. (Kretzmann)

**20:14** *did not know that it was Jesus*. A number of times the risen Jesus was not recognized (21:4; Mt 28:17; Lk 24:16, 37). He may have looked different, or he may intentionally have prevented recognition. (CSB)

Even those who knew Jesus best did not recognize Him until His Word made Him known. (TLSB)

While Mary was still in the midst of her bitter complaint to the angels, she may have heard some noise behind her, a footstep or a rustling, which caused her to turn around quickly. She noticed that there was a man standing there, but somehow she did not associate this man with her Lord. It was not merely that her eyes were dim with tears, but that Jesus now appeared in a form from which all lowliness had vanished, and which was also glorified, spiritualized. As Jesus chose, He could make Himself visible and invisible, be present now in one place, now in another; He could either assume the old familiar aspect in which His disciples knew Him, or He could appear before them as a stranger whom they in no way associated with their former Master. (Kretzmann)

**20:15** *why are you weeping* – Jesus repeated the question asked by the angels in verse 13. Then His second question began to lead Mary out of her distress, to consider why Jesus was not in the tomb. (TLSB)

*him to be the gardener* – Even His voice He had changed. His sympathetic question, therefore, couched in the same words as that of the angels, only causes a new outburst of resentment and grief. She took Jesus for the gardener, the man that certainly should know something about the disappearance of her Lord. If he was responsible for the removal of the body, he was to give her the necessary information at once, in order that she might go and carry Him away. The idea may have struck Mary that the gardener had seen fit to take the body to some other grave near by, because this tomb was to be used for another body. Note the love of Mary: Weak woman that she is, she will undertake single-handed to carry the body of her beloved Lord away. (Kretzmann)

*where have you laid him* – “Tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Imagine Mary carrying a corpse back to the grave all by herself! This is yet another indication of her emotions speaking. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

**20:16** *Mary*. Cf. 10:3–4(CSB)

The Good Shepherd called His sheep by name, and she recognized His voice (cf 10:3-4). (TLSB)

“Mary”: The name alone is sufficient to open Mary’s eyes to see outside the tomb to the living Lord. There is a tie to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who calls his sheep by name and whose sheep know his voice (10:3).

But Jesus felt that the time had now come for Him to reveal Himself. In the old familiar voice which all the disciples knew and loved, He spoke only that one word: Mary! The form of the speaker might have been unfamiliar, His body might have been glorified. but by that voice Mary would have known Him anywhere. (Kretzmann)

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” The evangelists like to paint word pictures with the moments when they report the very words Jesus spoke (see also Mk 5:41–42). Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

*Rabboni*. A strengthened form of *Rabbi*, and in the NT found elsewhere only in Mk 10:51 (in the Greek). Although the word means “(my) teacher,” there are few if any examples of its use in ancient Judaism as a form of address other than in calling on God in prayer. However, John’s explanation casts doubt on any thought that Mary intended to address Jesus as God here.

Aram “my lord, my master.” The note from Mark 9:5 says, “From Hebrew rabban, “chief” or “great one.” (TLSB)

From the depths of a heart transported with joy her shout broke forth: Rabboni; my Master! He was there, alive and well; and nothing else mattered. And she may have thought that the old, familiar intercourse would again be resumed, that she could touch Him, assure herself definitely as to His identity. (Kretzmann)

Even after Jesus speaks, Mary still thinks inside the tomb and addresses Jesus as “Sir.” *kurie* must be taken as a reference to the gardener, not in the theological sense of “Lord.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

**20:17** *Do not cling to me.* † The present tense of the imperative indicates continued action, not mere “touching.” Thus the command to Mary does not conflict with the invitation to Thomas in v. 27. (CSB)

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.” Mary is pictured here as clutching Jesus’ feet. He tells her to stop this physical embrace. This is the source of the “I Don’t Know How to Love Him” legend. Yet on the next Sunday evening, for example, he instructs Thomas to touch him (v 27). A better explanation for this statement is in the nature of the relationship the risen Lord had with Mary and with Thomas. It was not beneficial for Mary to cling to Jesus, whereas it was essential for Thomas to know that Jesus was physically risen from the dead. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

Literally means: “do not keep clinging.” Mary was holding on to Jesus, but He asked her to let go of Him. (TLSB)

Mary wishes for life outside the tomb to be a return to the way things were before Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus tells her not to limit him by holding onto him. Life now will begin with forgiveness, restoration, and revitalization. Jesus will remove his visible presence from the disciples (16:5–16) so the Holy Spirit will continue his real presence among them until the day comes when we, too, will see the glory Jesus has with the Father (17:24). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

But the time of intimate companionship between Master and pupils had now gone by. Jesus warns her not to touch Him; this was not His permanent return to visible fellowship with His disciples. (Kretzmann)

*I have not yet ascended.* The meaning appears to be that the ascension was still some time off. Mary would have opportunity to see Jesus again, so she need not cling to him. Alternatively, Jesus may be reminding Mary that after his crucifixion she cannot have him with her except through the Holy Spirit (see 16:5–16). (CSB)

Jesus would still be visibly present for a time. Thus, Mary must go and tell the disciples of His appearing. (TLSB)

He gives her the reason for this prohibition: Because I have not yet ascended to My Father. After His glorification had been fully accomplished, His disciples might enter into closer communion with Him than ever before, in the manner which He had explained to the apostles in the last discourses on the evening before His death. By His ascension, Jesus entered into the full and unlimited use of His divine majesty, and thus also of His omnipresence. And therefore He is now closer to His disciples than ever before. By faith all the believers have Jesus in their own hearts, a much more intimate, a much closer communion than ever that was which obtained between Christ and His disciples in the state of His humiliation. (Kretzmann)

*my brothers.* Probably the disciples (cf. v. 18; Mt 12:50). The members of his family did not believe in him (7:5), though they became disciples not long after this (Ac 1:14). (CSB)

*my Father and your Father.* God is Father both of Christ and of believers, but in different senses (see 1:12, 14, 18, 34). (CSB)

It is a wonderfully beautiful message which Jesus incidentally entrusts to Mary, which she should commit to His brethren: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God. There is a world of comfort in the word “brethren.” “These words should fittingly be written with great and golden letters, not simply on paper nor into a book, but on our hearts, that they might live therein: Go, and tell My brethren. That surely should be a word to make a Christian joyful, and to awaken and stimulate love to. ward Christ. ...If one would consider rightly how rich and comforting these words are, he would become intoxicated for joy and desire, as Mary Magdalene was intoxicated with devotion and love toward the Lord. Who of us would believe certainly and firmly in his heart that Christ is his Brother, he would come along with leaps and say: Who am I to be honored thus and to be, and be called, the son of God? For I surely am not worthy that such a great King and Lord of all creatures should call me His creature. But now He is not satisfied to call me His creature, but wants me to be and be called His brother. Should I, then, not be happy, since that Man calls me His brother who is the Lord over heaven and earth, over sin and death, over devil and hell, and all that may be named, not only in this world, but also in that to comet”

100) The words of Jesus are unmistakable: He gives to His believers the high and great honor, placing them absolutely on the same level with Himself. That is the glorious fruit and result of His work of redemption. Mary Magdalene, for her part, now believed. (Kretzmann)

**20:18** *went and announced* – She was convinced that the resurrection of Jesus was the seal of the completed redemption. And she brought her message to the disciples. She stated, without doubt or hesitation, that she had seen the Lord, and that these were His words to them. A true believer will always testify of the faith in his heart. And if, in addition, such a person is commissioned and called by the Lord to make known the fact of the resurrection to others, the testimony should be made with all gladness and with the assurance that carries conviction. (Kretzmann)

“Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with the news,” *angellousa*. Mary was the *first evangelist*. “I have seen the Lord!” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 3)

Mary now witnesses to the new reality that is life outside the tomb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 11, Part 2)

**20:11–18** After His resurrection, Jesus first appears to Mary Magdalene, who is led to recognize Him and goes to tell the disciples she has seen the Lord. When death confronts us, sorrow and a sense of loss may overcome us. But because Christ is risen, Christians can confidently assure one another that God will wipe away our tears (Rv 21:4). • O risen Christ, end our nights of sorrow and restore to us the joy of our salvation. Amen. (TLSB)

*Jesus Appears to the Disciples*

**19** On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, **“Peace be with you.”** **20** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”** **22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”**

**20:19-31** Today’s lesson begins on the evening of Easter day with the disciples locked in a room in fear of the Jews. When Jesus appears to them, their initial reaction is greater fear still. But their fear begins to give way to the peace that Jesus brings them. A week later the disciples are once again found behind locked doors, implying that they remained fearful. Big fears go away slowly and require much encouraging. Thomas’s doubting was a symptom of his fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

*humin*, “Peace be with you.” Throughout the New **20:19, 21, 26** *eirēnē* Testament, the Greek recalls the Hebrew *shalom*. In this one word is comprehended—and conveyed—the entire essence of the Gospel. So much more than absence of war or conflict, *shalom* describes the full condition of well-being that accrues when God and man are at one. Since the fall, of course, this is possible only when sin, which put enmity between God and his creatures, has been removed. And this, then, takes us specifically to the cross, where the reconciliation took place. It was peace that was promised in the first expression of Gospel (enmity between the serpent and Eve’s seed meant reconciliation of her offspring to God, Gen 3:15), and it is peace that is described in the

final images of Scripture, when the well-being of creation is restored (Revelation 21–22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

Moreover, the blessing of peace, which Jesus extends three times in this text, is never simply a pious wish, but actually conveys all of this. When Aaron would speak the *shalom* upon Israel, God promised, “I will bless them” (Num 6:27). Many a pastor has wisely instructed his confirmation class that if they should miss the entire Divine Service and arrive only in time for the Benediction, the trip is eternally valuable. In those words of peace alone, hearers *have*, have been given, every blessing of a reconciled, all-powerful and all-loving God to his people. The disciples received all this each time Jesus spoke the blessing in this text. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

Notice the way a speaking of peace introduces each major movement of the story: the reinstatement of the Ten (vv 19–20), the giving of the Office of the Keys (vv 21–23), and the restoration of Thomas (vv 26–29). These three occurrences for these three movements shape the outline here offered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

This passage is paralleled at Luke 24:36–49 and Mark 16:14–18 which ought be read. It was late in the evening. The group was composed of the disciples, those with them and the two Emmaus disciples. They were eating. (Buls)

Word of Jesus’ resurrection has already reached the disciples by Easter evening. Mary Magdalene and other women have seen the Lord and, we can be sure, have dutifully carried out their assignment to bring word to Jesus’ brethren, especially Peter (20:17–18; also Mt 28:10; Mk 16:7; Lk 24:9–10). Peter himself, with John, had seen the empty tomb, and John had even “believed” (Jn 20:6–8). Further, the personal appearance to Peter (“Simon,” Lk 24:34; “Cephas,” 1 Cor 15:5) has almost surely taken place before our text. The fact that Jesus had risen could no longer have seemed like the “idle tale” the disciples had taken it to be earlier (Lk 24:11). What remains to make *this* appearance so noteworthy? Fear of Jesus himself! The disciples had abandoned him at the most crucial moment. Was it entirely good news that he was alive? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**20:19** *first day of the week* – “That first day of the week” is a conscious effort to inform the reader that we are still on Easter Day. The identification of the risen Christ with the crucified Jesus is made at the first appearances. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 2)

“Evening of that first day of the week”—this is a resurrection day event. “It is still Easter,” we would say. “The disciples” includes more than the 10 (Judas and Thomas missing) as Lk 24:33–36 supports. Security-conscious, out of fear for what the Jewish leaders might do to them, the disciples had all doors locked. “Jesus came and stood among them.” He was suddenly there! “Peace be with you!” never meant so much to the disciples (cf in 14:27). They might have expected to be taken to task for their conduct on the past Thursday and Friday. Instead, Jesus comforts and reassures his followers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

*ousēs oun opsias tēi hēmerai ekeinēi tēi mīai sabbatōn*, “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week.” Time is often hard to determine in John’s Gospel, but clearly this is the evening of Easter Day. Jesus announces peace to the whole assembly of gathered disciples and gives the Holy Spirit. The giving of the Holy Spirit is something associated with Pentecost. The Spirit is given to commission the Church and lead it to confess Jesus as Lord before the world so that all may have life in Jesus’ name (v 31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

*disciples*. Probably includes others besides the apostles, “the Twelve” (v. 24). (CSB)

*hoi mathētai*, “the disciples.” This may be a group as large as 120 (Acts 1:15). It includes more than the Twelve, as v 24 seems to indicate in its designation of Thomas. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

This includes more than the 10 (Judas and Thomas are missing). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 2)

*doors being locked* – Security-conscious, out of fear for what the Jewish leaders might do to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 2)

“the doors being locked . . . for fear of the Jews.” That was the disciples’ obvious fear, but if Jesus was alive *and on their side*, the Jews would be of no concern. The disciples’ rejection of Jesus’ mission left them in doubt as to whether Jesus was their friend any longer or rather might abandon them—or worse. This is the beauty behind Jesus’ word “Peace” (also vv 21, 26). They *are* reconciled! Thank God our faithlessness does not stop Jesus from coming with his blessing of peace. This is a peace defined by Jesus’ character and work and delivered on his terms. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

They knew that Caiaphas could have his soldiers drag them into the night and hold a trial that even quicker than Jesus’ trial. After all, as long as Pilate had agreed to Jesus’ death, he would have to be consistent and agree to theirs. So a sense of fear and dread filled the room. (LifeLight)

But just as heavy was the sadness. Despite the reports of the women, the disciples were still convinced that everything was over. Three years of hoping, learning, and growing were gone. God was now far off again instead of being as near as Jesus’ presence. The ugliness of the cross was still etched in their memories. It was all over. They were weeping not only for themselves, but also for Israel and for the world. (LifeLight)

Yet they heard again and again the strange stories – the message by the angels to the women (Matt 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8; John 20:10-13), the appearances of Jesus to the women (Matt 28:8-10; John 20:14-17) and the appearance of Jesus to the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13-35). Did they dare to hope? The mind plays tricks when one is sorrowing and fervently wishing that things aren’t as they are. (LifeLight)

Besides showing how utterly the Jew rejected Jesus, it clearly shows the disciples’ lack of faith at this time. After the Ascension and Pentecost they are joyful and fearless. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*the Jews*. The disciples were afraid that they would be arrested for supporting Jesus’ alleged conspiracy against the authority of imperial Rome. (TLSB)

*came and stood among them* – The body of Jesus, now glorified, was no longer contained by time and space limitations. He could suddenly be there. John’s gospel began with the marvelous assertion that the Word, The Son of God, “became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (1:14). Now here He was again coming just as quietly as He had the first time when He was born in a stable in a quiet an insignificant village to two unimportant people, as the world

counts unimportance. Standing in their midst made all the difference in the world. Now they would know and believe. Now they would listen and wait. Now Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would come. Now they would make a difference. (LifeLight)

*estē eis to meson*, “stood among them.” The Word that became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14) continues to dwell in the midst of his people. This is the reason his people have peace, can forgive sin, and witness to the signs so others believe and have life in his name. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

After His resurrection, Jesus more fully manifested His divine attributes. Thus, though still completely human, He did not allow physical barriers to keep Him from revealing Himself to His disciples. Luther states, “The evangelist says not that they saw him enter, but ‘He appeared or stood in their midst’ (Luke 24:36), which sounds as if he had been there already, hidden, and now revealed himself, as he also did to Mary Magdalene at the grave (John 20:14), and with all to whom he appeared” (AE 37:66). (TLSB)

*Peace be with you!* The normal Hebrew greeting (cf. Da 10:19). Because of their behavior the previous Friday, they may have expected rebuke and censure; but Jesus calmed their fears (CSB)

“Fear of the Jews” paralyzed the disciples. Closed doors shut out the enemy, but did not shut out the risen Christ, who came to them to dispel their guilt and fear with a message of peace. “Peace be with you!” is, in this context, far more than a casual greeting. This is the peace all the prophets declare, the peace Jesus himself promised to give to his disciples (Jn 14:27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

The *shalom* “shalom” behind the Greek *Eirēnē*, “peace” has many implications about salvation of the whole person. Used with the dative of address, this is a translation of the common greeting on arrival (1 Sam 25:6). Instead of rebuking the disciples for their conduct on Good Friday, Jesus bestows his peace on them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

*eijrhvnh uJmi'n*, “peace be with you”: Though the disciples were huddled together in fear, Jesus does not come to them saying, “Don’t be afraid,” but instead greets them with, “Peace be with you.” Peace is the antithesis of fear. Jesus only uses this greeting in the context of appearing to his disciples after the resurrection (here and in Lk 24:36). This greeting is common in the Epistles, especially in the opening words, echoing the peace that Jesus extended to his first disciples. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The greeting of “peace” in the OT wished prosperity in body and soul to the person being greeted. It occurs many times in Luke: (1) Mary (1:28), (2) Birth (2:14), (3) Forgive sins (7:50), Healed (8:48), Sending of 72 (10:5-7), Palm Sunday (19:38). (CSB)

*eirēnē humin*, “peace be with you.” In John, “peace be with you” is the equivalent of the Synoptics’ “fear not.” Fear can be set aside because of the one who is present. While the resurrected Jesus is present when not visible, he makes this visit Easter evening and eight days later to assure the disciples that he is in their midst. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

Now the Father’s anger over sin had been satisfied through the death of His son, the perfect substitute for our sins. (LifeLight)

This is not an empty greeting. This is full Gospel. It is an absolution. The greeting is in keeping with the Greeter. The first thing He does is to forgive their sins and declare that all is well. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:20** *his hands and side*. Where the wounds were (John does not refer to the wounds in the feet). According to Lk 24:37 they thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus was clearly identifying himself. (CSB)

“Showed them his hands and side”—He flashed his “identification badges” to establish who he was, the Teacher and Lord they had known so intimately for three years, Jesus of Nazareth. This was not an apparition produced by intense fear or mob psychology. His wounds prove that the same body that hung on the cross is now risen. For their own faith, as well as their future testimony, it was essential that the disciples positively identify him. The holy wounds of Jesus continue to bring joy and assurance to us today. They are evidence of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

Jesus is always reaching out and teaching. For their own faith, as well as their future testimony, it was essential that the disciples positively identify him. The wounds of Jesus bring joy and assurance to us today. They are proof of Jesus’ death and resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 2)

“After he said this.” The greeting of peace is to be connected to the actions that follow. Jesus chose to retain in his glorified body the mortal wounds of the crucifixion. He did so because these are the wounds that heal and the marks of “the punishment that brought us peace” (Is 53:5). They are not marks of shame, but of victory because, through them, the sinner has been reconciled to God. (“Behold his hands and side, Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified” [LW 278:3].) The wounds verify that this man standing among the disciples was the very Jesus who died on a cross on Friday. They are, of course, filled with joy, just as Jesus had promised (Jn 16:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

“He showed them his hands and his side.” Salvation is an “in the dirt” affair. He became “sin who knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21) so that we might be saved. He got his hands dirty and bloody. Salvation is also an event in history. These are not metaphorical hands; these are the hands of Jesus, the one who was crucified, died, and was buried. The salvation of God has handprints and footprints in history so that “peace on earth, goodwill toward men” might be visible to all. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

This was no ghost, no figment of battered imaginations. This really was the Lord with a real body, the same body that had seen suffering on the cross! Finally, all their fears and forebodings and hopelessness disappeared in the joy of recognition and realization. Jesus was truly alive and in their midst! (LifeLight)

Proved beyond doubt that the risen Lord, though appearing with a glorified body, was the same person as the crucified Christ. Luther, “So the very same Christ who was born of Mary and who was nailed to the cross truly rose again. It was He and no other, as He showed His disciples the scars in His hands and His side. (TLSB)

*were glad* – *chair* — to be full of “*cheer*”, that is, calmly *happy* or well off.

Lenski remarks: “Jesus appeared again and again, intensifying faith and joy, until nothing could ever disturb the solid certainty. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*the Lord* – This the title used in vv 18,25, 28 by those who believed in His resurrection. John is writing this from the perspective of post-Easter faith as he records its awakening in the disciples. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 2)

**20:21-23** The peace won for them and offered to them is now to be carried by the disciples to the whole world. Repeating the greeting of peace, Jesus commissions the disciples to undertake a mission of peace carrying the word of peace. The First Adam received the breath of life from God. Jesus, the Last Adam, now breathes the divine breath that bestows the Spirit of life to the disciples. This Spirit will empower them to carry out the mission of forgiving and retaining sins. Jesus speaks of forgiving as “releasing” sins, *ajfh'te*. The opposite of releasing is “grasping,” or retaining, sins, *krath'te*. Both words of the church actually convey what is spoken, as Luther says in the Small Catechism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

These verses demonstrate that the essence of Jesus’ work is forgiveness achieved and delivered. These verses, like Mt 28:18–20, also demonstrate that God’s gifts of life and salvation are for all. The disciples are to be agents of his grace, ambassadors of his reconciliation by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even this work is not our work for him, but the Holy Spirit’s work in us for others. Graced people get to live gracious lives. Forgiven people get to live forgiving lives. Eph 2:8–10 says it well—that we are saved by grace and are given works that he already prepared beforehand for us to do. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**20:21** *Peace be with you!* “Peace” is at the very heart of the Gospel message (Rom 5a:1–5) that the disciples would now be sent to proclaim. The sending is repeated in Mt 28:19–20 and Acts 1:8; connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Christ’s giving the Spirit by breathing on his disciples at this time is seen by Lenski as a “preliminary stage” to Pentecost. By his word from the cross “It is finished” Jesus established a “done” religion, a salvation accomplished and paid for, so that the disciples would work with a completed justification as they went out to “forgive” or “not forgive” sins (in what we know as the Office of the Keys). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

Peace is at the heart of the Gospel message.

First He actually bestowed the only peace to them personally. Now He does it again for their important office, not just to the disciples, for more than disciples were present. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*Father has send me* – *apostello* - *set apart*, that is, (by implication) to *send out* (properly on a mission). – Jesus was sent in a unique way for a unique mission.

Note the different verbs used for send: *ajpostevllw* is used by Jesus to describe how the Father had sent him, while *pevmpw* is used to describe how Jesus is sending his disciples. Jesus was sent in a unique way for a unique mission. We are sent to proclaim his work—to echo the Gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

*I am sending you.* *pempo* - to *dispatch*, send, thrust. We are sent to proclaim his work – echo the Gospel.

Christ sends forth His disciples in equality, without any distinction... He says, ‘As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.’ He says that He sends them individually in the same way He Himself was sent (John 12:44-50). Hus, “Jesus sends them to bear testimony to the truth, to preach the word of salvation, and, by life and teaching, to show the way of blessedness to the people. (TLSB)

**20:22** *breathed on them* – empusao - *blow at or on*:—breathe on.

Greek term used only here in NT. Jesus’ words, formed by breaths of air, delivered the Spirit to the disciples (Greek pneuma translates as “spirit” or “wind” [breath]). Augustine says, “That bodily breathing, proceeding from the body with the feeling of bodily touching, was not the substance of the Holy Spirit, but a declaration by a fitting sign, that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son” (NPNF). (TLSB)

*enephusēsen*: aorist of *emphusaō*, “to breathe on.” Suggests new creation. Jesus creates the authority to loose and bind. There are overtones of Gen 2:7 and the creation of a people here. The chief character of this new creation is the vehicle of God’s forgiveness in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

In close connection to the sending of the disciples, Jesus breathes on them, ejnefuvshsen, to give them the Holy Spirit. This is reminiscent of Gen 2:7 and may indicate the new creation ushered in by Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and the devil. It is the giving of the Spirit for a specific purpose—in this case in connection with the establishment of the Office of the Keys (v 23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The word *emphusaō* means “to breathe on” and takes the dative. In the LXX of Gen 2:7 it is used with *eis*, “into,” as the Lord God blows into the man and he becomes a living being. In Ezek 37:9 the Spirit or wind blows into the enflashed dry bones, and they become alive—a type of resurrection. Although the preposition is not used here, “John expects his readers to see a parallel between God’s creative breath in Gen 2:7 and Jesus’ act of breathing here” (Newman and Nida, p 615). The life imparted here is not mere physical life, but new life in the Spirit, and in particular the ability granted by the Spirit to carry out the office of the keys, described in the next verse. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

The word uses in 2 Tim 3:16, *theopneustos*, “God-breathed, inspired,” comes from a different root, *pneō*. Jesus blows his Spirit on the disciples, and the Spirit has called, gathered, enlightened, and kept us all, but the church is not inspired in the same way Scripture is inspired. The accent in 2 Tim 3:16 is on the effectiveness of the written Word, not the reported news. However, we dare not denigrate the proclamation, which carries the Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

*Receive the Holy Spirit.* Thus anticipating what happened 50 days later on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2). The disciples needed God’s help to carry out the commission they had just been given. (CSB)

By giving the Holy Spirit, Jesus was equipping the disciples for the ongoing work assigned to them, including especially the exercise of the Office of the Keys. (TLSB)

The gift is the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose. They already had the Holy Spirit for they were believers. And this is not the same bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost for that is called “power from on high.” Here Jesus bestows the Office of the Keys, a permanent bestowal on all Christians. Cf. Mt. 16:19; 18:17, 20. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:23†** Lit. “Those whose sins you forgive have already been forgiven; those whose sins you do not forgive have not been forgiven.” God does not forgive people’s sins because we do so, nor does he withhold forgiveness because we do. Rather, those who proclaim the gospel are in effect forgiving or not forgiving sins, depending on whether the hearers believe in Jesus Christ or not. (CSB)

There are only two classes of people, those who are to be absolved and those who are not be absolved. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*they are forgiven* – *aphiemi* - to *send forth*, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up. – In Leviticus 16:10 on the Day of Atonement the sins of the people were laid on the scapegoat and sent away from the sight of God and the people.

“They are forgiven” (v. 23) is a common translation of the perfect tense expressing the present state which results from previous action. However, “in a conditional sentence it emphasized the continuous character of the action,” as in “God forgives them, and they remain forgiven” (Newman and Nida). The tense therefore emphasizes the efficacy of absolution. The textual variants (the present and future tenses) are more poorly attested. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

These words show that the Keys are given to all the apostles alike and that all apostles are sent forth alike. In addition, it must be recognized that the Keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church. Many most clear and firm arguments show this. For Christ, speaking about the Keys, adds, for example, “If two of you agree on earth” (Mt. 18:19). Therefore, He grants the Keys first and directly to the Church. This is why it is first the Church that has the right of calling. (TLSB)

Lenski rightly quotes Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19; Isaiah 43:25. Forgiven sins are buried and gone. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Psalm 103:12, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Micah 7:19, “You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”

Isaiah 43:25, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

The sins have already been lastingly forgiven. Christians merely declare what is already true. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

All Christians exercise the Office of the Keys privately. The pastor by virtue of his call, exercises it publicly for the specific congregation to which he is called. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:19–23** The once-crucified Jesus appears to His disciples, commissioning them for their work and equipping them with the Holy Spirit. Christians have received the most precious treasure on earth—the Gospel of forgiveness—but often keep it hidden from others. Pray that the Lord would grant you boldness. God raised Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and will equip us with every good thing to do His will (Heb 13:20–21). • O God, give us Your eternal peace and also boldness through the Holy Spirit. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Jesus and Thomas*

**24** Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” **26** Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” **28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

**20:24-25** The first “mission project” of the disciples falls on hard ground. Their fellow apostle Thomas refuses to believe the testimony they bring to him. He insists upon seeing and touching before he believes. “I will not believe” is emphatic. These are the words of hardened, determined, willful unbelief, not just weakness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

Jesus breaks through walls of fear to get to the disciples. With Thomas, he bursts through a wall of doubt. Thomas’s doubt reaffirms the uniqueness of Jesus’ actions; he is the Messiah who must serve. Thomas knew that Jesus was the Crucified One with nail prints and a hole in his side. Yet, like Peter (Mt 16:21–23), Thomas struggled with how a “crucified Messiah” could be the Savior. False expectations of Jesus’ mission (expecting glory rather than a cross) caused Thomas to stumble. His doubt is emphatic in the Greek. It is resolute unbelief. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**20:24** *Thomas was not with the twelve.* Perhaps some necessity kept him away. Perhaps he was overcome with despair and hopelessness. – Sadly many miss the Lord today because they do not join the gathering of fellow Christians in worship and study of the Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

Since Thomas was absent from the gathering of Christ’s people, he missed so much—in this case, seeing the risen Lord. Sadly, many miss the Lord today because they do not join the gathering of Christian brothers and sisters in worship and study of the Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

Why he was absent is not known. But to absent one's self from Christian brethren in a time of crisis leads to trouble. Christians assemble for mutual comfort in Christ. Heb. 10:25. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:25** *other disciples told him – Elegon*, imperfect, indicates that the other disciples kept, repeatedly telling Thomas that they had seen the Lord. Note also the contrast here between the witness of the 10 disciples and the hardheadedness of Thomas, who insists on seeing Christ's identification marks and touching them with his own hands. He rejects the testimony of others as invalid or unreliable. How many today still reject the apostolic testimony? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

*Unless I see ... and put ... I will not believe.* Hardheaded skepticism can scarcely go further than this. (CSB)

Thomas insists on irrefutable, physical evidence despite the word of 10 faithful witnesses. His statement "I will not believe," *uj mh; pisteuvsu*, is an emphatic, categorical denial. It shows that Thomas lacked faith, *pivsti*", both in the testimony of the other disciples and in the words of the Lord to which they were testifying. In this state of unbelief he resorts to a worldly standard for acceptance and trust: I will only believe that which can be proven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

Instead of accepting the testimony of fellow disciples, Thomas remained deeply skeptical and demanded tactile proof of Jesus' physical resurrection. (TLSB)

*pisteuo* to *have faith* (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), to *entrust* (especially one's spiritual well being to Christ):—believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with. – This is an emphatic and categorical denial of both what the disciples and Jesus said. In this state of unbelief he resorts to a worldly standard for acceptance and trust: I will only believe that which can be proven. How many today still reject the testimony of the Scriptures.

This is an emphatic, categorical denial. It shows that Thomas lacked faith, *pistos*, both in the testimony of the other disciples and in the words of the Lord to which they were testifying. In this state of unbelief he resorts to a worldly standard for acceptance and trust: I will only believe that which can be proven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

Thomas was not just doubting. Thomas would not believe. And in this state he speaks in a superior, demanding fashion. He was not *si* "gullible" as were the rest, he maintained. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:26-27** What patient, seeking love of the Savior! He condescends to Thomas' requirement for both visual and physical "proof" of his resurrection, adding the plea, "Stop doubting and believe." Was it really necessary for Thomas to physically touch Jesus before he would believe? Most likely, the sight of the living Jesus was enough. Here is one more example of Jesus conquering unbelief. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

Jesus recognizes Thomas's unbelief. He calls him to believe, if not on the testimony of his fellow disciples, then on the evidence standing before him. Jesus' command to Thomas, *mh; givnou a[pisto] ajlla; pistov*", is a present imperative with a negation. The structure indicates that a present action should cease and a new action begin in its place. Thomas's response shows that

Jesus not only commands faith, but he works the faith he commands. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

Jesus graciously provided Thomas the proof he demanded. Thomas, after all, as an apostle, had to be an eyewitness of the risen Christ. Again—and again through closed doors—the risen Christ brought the message of peace, but knowing the thoughts and words of Thomas, he offered the nail marks in his hands and the wound in his side to the finger and hand of the unbelieving disciple. This offer was given together with a rebuke, “Stop doubting and believe.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

Jesus comes looking for Thomas as he does for us. Faith is always a gift. Jesus comes with peace that opens a doubting heart. He offers again the witness of his suffering and death, his hands and side, so Thomas could see the victory that comes only through the cross. Jesus’ rebuke is also an invitation: “Stop your doubting and believe.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**20:26** *a week later* – The following Sunday (calculated by using Jewish inclusive reckoning). (TLSB)

*inside again* – Perhaps same location as in verse 19. (TLSB)

Why the disciples had not yet gone to Galilee (Mk. 16:7) is not known. Ylvisaker says: None of them could summon the courage necessary for such a journey.” Lenski remarks: “As far as making the start for Galilee is concerned, the safest view is that the disciples awaited specific directions from the Lord.” In any case, their waiting in Jerusalem was providential, for it afforded opportunity to retrieve unbelieving Thomas. Jesus cared much for Peter who had denied Him, Mary Magdalene, from whom He had driven seven evil spirits, and Thomas who would not believe. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*Peace.* A common Hebrew greeting (20:19, 21, 26), which Jesus uses here in an unusual way. The term speaks, in effect, of the salvation that Christ’s redemptive work will achieve for his disciples—total well-being and inner rest of spirit, in fellowship with God. All true peace is his gift, which the repetition emphasizes. *I do not give ... as the world gives.* In its greetings of peace the world can only express a longing or wish. But Jesus’ peace is real and present.) (CSB)

**20:27** *put...see...put your hand* – What patient, seeking love of the Savior! He condescends to Thomas’ requirement for both visual and physical proof of his resurrection, adding the plea, “Stop doubting and believe.” Here is one more example of Jesus conquering unbelief. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

Jesus graciously accommodated Thomas’s request, to his astonishment and perhaps even his shame. (TLSB)

Jesus condescendingly meets all demand made by Thomas. Thomas ended with a categorical denial. Jesus ends with a prohibition. The display of omniscience in the human nature of Jesus must have impressed Thomas deeply, plus the fact that Jesus’ human nature not fully used the omnipresence of the of the divine nature. Did Thomas actually feel Jesus’ wounds? WE know not. But we know what 1 John 1:1 says. Did he kneel or prostrate himself before Jesus? We know not but we know what he said in verse 28. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The present imperative means that the action to be stopped is presently going on. Jesus bids Thomas to stop being an unbeliever and to become a believer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 2)

*believing* – Literally, “become believing.” (TLSB)

The words *apistos* and *pistos* are often used to distinguish between unbelievers and Christians, respectively. The present imperative means that the action to be stopped is presently going on. Jesus bids Thomas to stop being an unbeliever and to become a believer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

Jesus conquers unbelief by His Word. With the prohibition comes the power to believe. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:28-29** Thomas was convinced by seeing the risen Jesus. He immediately humbled himself before Jesus and declared him to be Lord and God, both clearly divine names. Jesus used the joyful occasion of Thomas’s “conversion” to pronounce a greater blessing on those who believe without seeing such proof, namely, on the basis of the Word alone. In the very near future, the whole church would be gathered through this Word alone. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

**20:28** *My Lord and my God!* The high point of faith. (CSB)

How fitting is the bold confession of Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” *Kurios* and *theos* is a combination found in the LXX for the name of the God of Israel (*Yhvh elohim* “Yahweh Elohim/God”; see, for instance, Gen 2:4; Pss 72:18 [MT 72:19]; 84:8, 11 [MT 84:9, 12].) John’s book has come full circle from 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word . . . with God . . . was God” to the clear, awesome identification of Jesus as “Lord . . . God.” Jesus had not been addressed this way before, but is commonly spoken of this way in the remainder of the New Testament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

Restatement of 1:1, a central Christological affirmation in John. (TLSB)

To understand Thomas’ answer as a mere exclamation of surprise is blasphemous in view of the context. The words are, of course, an exclamation, but at the same times, an address (vocative) and a humble confession of sin and confession of faith. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:29** *because you have seen* – Even though Thomas believes, Jesus criticizes him for rejecting the witness of the other disciples and believing only when the evidence was overwhelming. Because Thomas had been with him longer Jesus was disappointed that Thomas had still not gotten it. BUT he didn’t give up on him and uses this opportunity to teach others who will read about this account.

Few have had sight-based faith as did Thomas. Peter speaks of those who, without seeing, love and believe in the Christ and have the same joy as those who saw him (1 Pet 1:8). Down through the ages faith has come by means of hearing the message of Christ since the Spirit works through the Word (Rom 10:17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

*those who have not seen and yet have believed.* Would have been very few at this time. All whom John mentions had seen in some sense. The words, of course, apply to future believers as well. (CSB)

*hoi mē idontes kai pisteusantes*, “those not seeing and believing.” We are not eyewitnesses and yet are blessed because we believe. This is also a challenge to Thomas and the rest who did not believe Jesus was present. We may rethink our misconception about doubting Thomas and consider the doubting disciples. Do we see? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

Even though Thomas believes, Jesus criticizes him for rejecting the witness of the other disciples and believing only when the evidence was overwhelming. *makavrio*, “blessed,” reminds us of the Beatitudes and the blessings of faith that come through the Word. Unlike Thomas, we have not seen but have come to faith through the Gospel—the same Gospel that was first proclaimed by the disciples who were locked in the Upper Room on Easter night in fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

*Makarios* – supremely *blest*; by extension *fortunate, well off*:—blessed, happy – Blessed reminds us of the Beatitudes and the blessings of faith that come through the Word.

Down through the ages faith has come by means of hearing the message of Christ since the Spirit works through the Word. (Romans 10:17). This is the same Gospel that was first proclaimed by the disciples who were locked in the Upper Room on Easter night in fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

After Jesus’ ascension, people would come to faith without seeing Jesus, on the sole basis of the apostles’ witness (cf. 17:18, 20; Rm 10:17). (TLSB)

What Jesus is really criticizing is not merely “seeing” but the fact that Thomas categorically rejected the witness of the other disciples. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**20:24–29** Jesus appears before a skeptical Thomas, who upon seeing Jesus is moved to confess Him as Lord and God. Today, we live in a skeptical age that operates by the saying “I’ll believe it when I see it.” However, in the Word and the Sacraments, we see and we do receive the benefits of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Those who believe receive God’s divine favor, for whoever believes has everlasting life (3:36). • Even though I do not now see You, Lord, I believe and rejoice with inexpressible joy. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Purpose of This Book*

**30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 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.**

**20:30-31** οὐκ connects these two verses with the story of Thomas or, at least, Jesus’ blessing upon those who believe without seeing. Though John’s conclusion applies to the whole Gospel, it is also directly related to the immediate context. The disciples saw many other signs besides those recorded, but these recorded testimonies (in John’s Gospel) were written by the evangelist for the purpose of engendering faith in the one who hears without seeing. Through these written words, the hearer may and should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises concerning

the Messiah, the Son of God. This faith leads the believer to “life in his name.” The purpose of John’s Gospel, indeed of all Scripture, is to make sinners “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 2)

John reminds us that Jesus is coming to us through the testimony of these words. The fear of the disciples and the doubt of Thomas were met with the grace and peace of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. These things are not only “written” but testified to, so that we might believe also. The very lives of the disciples, who are transformed from fearful ones to faithful, courageous ones, bear witness to the hands and side of Jesus Christ for you and me. John, like Luke (Lk 1:1–4), challenges the reader to put his or her trust in this Jesus who is testified to in these words, for there is life in his name. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**20:30** *many other signs.* John had selected from among many. (CSB)

The word *sēmeion*, “miraculous sign,” is used in the synoptic gospels to denote the signs the Jews requested from Jesus but which he did not perform for them. It is also used of “the sign of the Son of Man,” which will appear in the last days. It is often tied to *terata* (“wonders”) as evidences accompanying the Messiah. But the synoptics do not use *sēmeion* for the miracles of Jesus; instead, they use the word *dunamis*, “power; miracle.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

However, John uses *sēmeion* 17 times, usually referring to Christ’s miracles. The “miraculous signs” are markers pointing beyond themselves to hidden divine truths. They are understood after Easter and Pentecost, but seldom when they occur. Because the Sacraments are also part of the reality toward which they point, Brown (p 186) sees them as continuations of *sēmeia*, “signs.” (See Morris, pp 684–91, for an excellent discussion of these words and their theological significance.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

The signs spoken of in verses 30 and 31 do not refer to proofs (Acts 1:3) of His resurrection, but those performed throughout His life beginning with the first miracle in Cana. Do they include His Resurrection? Yes, but it is not called that here, because it was not performed “in the presence of His disciples.” (Exegetical Notes – Bultmann)

*in the presence of his disciples.* Those who could testify to what he had done. John again stresses testimony (see note on 1:7). (CSB)

**20:31** *that you may believe.*† Expresses John’s purpose. See NIV text note and Introduction: Purpose and Emphases. (CSB)

*believe.* This crucial verse summarizes John’s purpose in writing his gospel, and the reason we (and everyone) should read it. John’s gospel contains 98 occurrences of *pisteuō*, “to believe.” “Believing and Christ are so much part of one another that the former inevitably implies the latter. . . . (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

This verse summarizes not only all of Easter but also John’s Gospel account. Every sign, every word, every name and title given to Jesus is given so we may believe and have life in his name. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 20, Part 2)

John admits that his gospel reports relatively few of all the “miraculous signs” of our Lord but enough is written that you may believe, *pisteu[s]ēte*. Why is the sigma in brackets? Both readings are equally good. Without the sigma it would be a present subjunctive, “that you may continue believing.” This would indicate that John was writing to Christians. However, with the sigma it is an aorist subjunctive, “that you may believe.” This would indicate that John’s intended readers were not yet believers. “By believing you may have life in his name” is another application of John’s words in chapter 1, “In him was life” (v 4), which was based on a new relationship with God as his children. (See the earlier sermon for Palm/Passion Sunday for more on the life-giving name of Jesus.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 8, Part 2)

*pisteuo* - to *have faith* (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), to *entrust* (especially one’s spiritual well being to Christ):—believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with. – In this case the form means “to keep on believing.” - This is really the purpose of John’s gospel and the purpose for our witness to Scriptural truths.

*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.* Faith has content. (CSB)

*the Christ.* This whole Gospel is written to show the truth of Jesus’ Messiahship and to present him as the Son of God, so that the readers may believe in him. (CSB)

*that by believing you may have life.* Another expression of purpose—to bring about faith that leads to life. (CSB)

*name.* Represents all that he is and stands for. (CSB)

Believing . . . takes the believer out of himself and makes him one with Christ” (Morris, p 337). The phrase “in his name” is equivalent to “in him” (Newman and Nida, p 621). The name of Jesus conveys his person and all his blessings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 2, Part 2)

John not only states the purpose of his Book, but summarizes succinctly its content. (TLSB)

**20:30–31** John, the author of this Gospel, clearly states its purpose and summarizes its central message. People commonly and mistakenly think that biblical books were written mainly to provide rules for godly living. Speaking through John, God announces the Good News that Jesus is His Son and that by faith in His name, we have life and salvation—the core message of the entire Scripture. • Let me gladly share this Good News, O God, that others may believe and live. Amen. (TLSB)