



Wholeness: Restored relationship btw God and Man

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John 20: Resurrection account

- This morning is Easter Sunday - a morning for celebration!
- It is also the last Sunday in our series on wholeness and we are looking at **restored relationship between God and man** – exactly what Easter Sunday celebrates
- We all know that or think that we know it.
- Some of **us are here today because** it is one of those days in the year that you go to church and some of us are here because we have been dragged here by a friend or family member. My hope is that you find more than you are looking for today.
- Have you ever wondered **what it is exactly** that we are celebrating?
- I mean if somebody asked you why we get so excited about Easter... Well it is the day that God raised Jesus from the dead.
- Yes but what does that mean? Look around you, is **the world not in turmoil?** People killing each other, divorce, poor relationships between people, extreme wealth and extreme poverty. **What exactly are we celebrating?**
- Have you ever had your world **turned upside down?** On its head?
- Life difficult and you are just getting by. You have a purpose, a mission and you are making the most of the life you know ... then something comes and turns that on its head.
- Rachel (my wife) is going through something like that at the moment, she is busy, working insane hours in our government hospitals as a doctor, she is trying to be the mother of two busy boys and trying to adjust and find time to help me lead this church.
- **She is stretched but life has meaning and purpose**, God has placed her here for a reason and that makes sense to her.
- If I had to ask her **2 months ago** what we celebrate today the answer would come easily.
- **But then life gets turned upside down.**
- Her father, the healthiest person in the family, who runs daily, watches his diet, has moved his life and family to Africa to serve God. (Part of her reason life makes sense)
- Her father gets diagnosed suddenly with a severe, rare form of Leukaemia, and has to start chemotherapy immediately.
- **As if life was not challenging enough in the first place.** I know that most of us can **identify** with something similar, the truth is as we look around our world it still broken, things are not the way they should be.
- **However, there are times, glimpses** of reality that happen to us along the way when life becomes clear; the world seems to be as it should be. Our hope is restored, what seemed so broken seems so right. Those are the things we need to hold onto, at those times **we know what it is that we are celebrating this morning** (signs of the Kingdom of God here on earth)



- Let's turn to a really amazing account of Easter Sunday. **John 20**
- I am going to read the whole chapter to us.
- **Paraphrase:** It is the morning of the third day after the death of Jesus, Mary finds the tomb empty and runs back to the disciples, they run to the tomb to find it empty as well... a lot of running. Two angels appear to Mary, and then Jesus appears to her and tells her to go and tell the disciples what he has said. Then Jesus appears to his disciples at various places over a period of time.
- That is pretty much how I remember this story...but there is so much detail here that we can miss if we don't look a bit more carefully.
- We are talking about restored **relationship between God and man** this morning so I want us to look at:
 - **What** that means?
 - **How** it happens?
 - **Why** it has happened?

Read John 20

What? Go and tell my brothers that I am going to **my father and your father my God and your God.** (that is the essence of this restoration)

- In verse 19 we see the **disciples hiding from the Jews**, their **world has just been turned upside down**, it is in turmoil.
- The messiah, the one who was **supposed to restore the throne of Israel** and remove the Roman Empire has been killed and now they fear for their lives.
- Jesus appears to them "**Peace be with you**", Jesus shows himself to them and restores order. And then he says "**Peace be with you**" again. In the midst of the chaos Jesus brings peace.
- He does not change the fact that they are still in danger but he **restores purpose**.
- He is showing them that things seem out of control, **but things are not always as they seem**.
- **As the father has sent me, I am sending you.**
- And then he breathes on them...The Holy Spirit and gave them a job (they are commissioned).
- It takes me back to a time in the beginning **of the age of man when life was as it should be**.
- A time when God created a garden, then **out of the dust of the earth he created a man in His image and breathed life into him (a breath of life)**.
- He placed the man in this garden **with trees and animals and gave him a job (He commissioned them)**.
- **An intimate relationship between God and man.**
- Things in harmony...
- **At this point, life was as it should be.**
- We are back in the room with the disciples, Jesus has breathed The Holy Spirit on them and restored purpose.



- For the disciples, **this is a glimpse of things as they should be** in the brokenness of the world this must have seemed right.
- An intimate relationship with our God, made possible through the resurrection of Jesus.
- But that is not all; it is so much cooler than that.
- **The nature of an intimate relationship is not a one size fits all approach.**
- I look at my two boys, Joshua 4 ½ yrs and Gabriel 3 yrs old. **They are so young but so different.**
- For me to affirm or show love to Joshua in a way that he understands I need to spend time with him doing the things he enjoys and helping him achieve success.
- With Gabriel, he needs physical affection, a hug, sitting with or on top of me is good enough for him.
- **For me the love is the same** but for them the way they receive it is different.
- When I look at the way we have all been created differently **I wonder why we try to fit people into a one size box.** We try to make everybody fit into the same box that we are comfortable with.
- **God created people differently and Jesus understands this... because he is God.**
- **He understands you,** I have heard people say that they can see how God (Jesus) is involved in **other people's lives but not in their own lives.**
- I think that has to do with how we deal with each other, **over hundreds (thousands) of years we have tried to define what a Christian looks like based on our own understanding or interaction with God.**
- **So if your life does not look like his or her life then something is wrong with you.**
- I want to undo that this morning; **God created us diverse,** and relates to us in our diversity on our level.
- Let's look at some of the ways in **John 20 -21**
 - **Mary Magdalene** – She arrives at the tomb early before it gets light, the tomb is open and there is no body, she runs back and tells the disciples. After they leave she hangs around and weeps. Jesus appears to her, and asks **who it is she is looking for,** she does not recognise him (thinks he is the gardener). The he says **"Mary"** the lights go on, she responds Rabboni. The relationship is restored. There is real intimacy in this relationship. She is the first to arrive and the last to leave; she loves Jesus. So much so that he has to tell her not to hold onto him.
 - I wonder if that is you this morning; you have or are seeking that kind of intimacy with the risen Christ... For you it takes intimacy on a personal level to believe, I think you will find it (because Jesus is alive and personal)
 - The **beloved disciple (John),** special mention is made of him out-running Peter to the tomb. He gets there and he does not go in, he waits for Peter (the slow coach), Peter observes the linen strips and the head piece. When Peter leaves the **beloved disciple enters** the tomb and believes. For him this is simple, the body was not stolen, Jesus was raised from the dead. He has a simple child like faith.



- In this account in 20-21 you see John mention the “competition” between the beloved disciple and Peter. If you are one of those people who just believe because you know in your heart that it is true. Well done, you out run the rest of us. But can I ask you to try and understand that it is not as easy for other people as it is for you. I would ask you this morning to stop and thank God for this gift of faith and ask how you can use it to help (rather than hinder) others.
- The **disciples** were overjoyed when they saw the Lord... In the room cowering away from the Jews, Jesus appears to them and shows them his hands and side. They see the wounds and they believe.
- For some of us, seeing is believing and so Jesus shows us.
- And then we get **Thomas**, he refuses to believe unless he can put his hands in the wounds and touch it. He does not trust his friends or his eyes. This is the same Thomas who earlier in John 11 says to the disciples when they are trying to convince Jesus not to go to Lazarus because people want to kill him there. Thomas says let us go with him (Jesus) so that we may die with him. He is called doubting Thomas but I think this name is unfair to him, he was fully prepared to die with Jesus. His response on touching the wounds is... “my Lord and my God”.
- Many of us can actually relate to this, we spend time researching the facts or proofs around the resurrection. We place its importance way up there, we don’t trust the response of people around us. But when you find what it is you are looking for, do you respond “**my Lord and my God**” (It’s not just an academic exercise). Jesus responds to Thomas; because you have seen me you have believed but blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.
- There is one more, I save the best until last; **Peter**. The rock, the leader of the early church. I love this story; it’s in **John 21**, The miraculous catch of fish. The disciples are fishing again... they were fishing before they were called to follow him and now they are fishing again. It’s as if that chapter of their lives is closed – Jesus is gone so back to what they know how to do. They have been out all night with no catch, a man appears on the shore and tells them to throw the net on the other side of the boat. Sounds familiar (**flesh this out a bit –Luke 5**). They do and pull in such a large catch that the nets are full but they don’t break. Then **the beloved disciple** says to Peter “it’s the Lord” (and Peter believes). For Peter it is food...no **it is being reminded of the call in the first place**. I love Peter’s response here because it is subtle you can miss it on the first pass. He jumps out of the boat, but he does something weird, He puts on his coat and steps into the water. It’s an odd thing to do unless you think that you are going to walk on the water – which he has done not so long ago.
- I find myself in this boat, whenever I am having difficulty believing I remind myself of the time I was called, and from time to time God reminds me of this call. When I remember this I go on believing.
- Many different interactions, each person met where they are at.
- That helps me; it should help you make sense of why you believe differently from those around you.



- For each of these people, for a **brief moment they got a glimpse of the world as it should be 'the rightness'**.
- **But it's not just about this. It's not about us staying in our happy place. Where we individually feel fluffy and nice.**

Why it has happened?

- We all come to the point of believing through our individual response - **but the point is to believe.**
- **John 20:31** we are called to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and by **believing you may have life in his name.**
- **The life that we are given is a life with purpose**, to continue the work that Jesus started.
- After the miraculous catch of fish, Jesus reinstates **Peter he says to him "follow me"** and for Peter that meaning was to literally follow him to death on a cross (you can read in John 21).
- We get to this point individually but we are sent out communally.
- **If we are following, where are we going?**
- In Matthew's account of this same event Jesus says: (Matt 28) ¹⁹"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them **to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**
- **Surely he is with us to the very end of the age.**
- **Revelation 21 tells of this New City, New Jerusalem on Earth.** A place where heaven meets earth. Where the dwelling of men will be with God, no more mourning, or tears. **It will be life as it should be.** But...⁶He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷He **who overcomes will inherit all this**, and I will be his God and he will be my son.
- **A time is coming when the intimate relationship of God and man will be fully restored but it is not yet.**
- Jesus resurrection **was the first fruits of that**, we are called to believe and follow him and surely he will be with us to the very end of the age.
- For now, **we see glimpses of that future, of that hope, the world as it should be.** Through our actions and our following of the commands of Jesus **those glimpses become more frequent.**
- Rachel's father was supposed to have had chemo for a total of 6 months – he's only had chemotherapy for 2 months now, but we heard this week that his cancer is officially in remission – nothing short of miraculous really (pray for the sick)
- He's still horribly weak and physically ill as a result of the chemo, **but in his remission we see glimpses of a world as it should be.**
- We praise you and thank you Jesus.
- And celebrate this with you this morning as we remember your resurrection.
- Pray