

Glory Rising

By [Mike Glodo](#)

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I find success generally has to do with lowering expectations. So thank you for complicating my day, Phillip, but I asked if I could read our text from John this morning. And so will you attend with me to John's Gospel? The 20th Chapter. We'll be reading the first 18 verses John chapter one, verses one through 18.

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. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciples, 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. So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first, and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed, For as yet, they did not understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus, Jesus had laid, one at the head and one at the feet. 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. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing but she did not know it was Jesus. 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.

Jesus said to her, "Mary,"

she turned and said to him, in Aramaic rabboni, which means teacher, 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." Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that he had said these things to her.

This is the word of God. May God add his blessing to the reading of His Word. Will you pray with me, oh Lord, we pray that You would open our eyes to behold wonderful things in your law. Quicken our hearts to believe these words, to trust them as true and trustworthy words, and help us not leave here today, just as hearers of your word, but doers as well, and we pray in the name of our risen Christ who has given us the spirit in order to glorify You. Oh Father. Amen.

Prepare to be bored.

Not in the next 30 minutes.

That's up to you, I guess. But prepare to be bored in life. I bring greetings from Orlando, the happiest place on earth, unless at two o'clock in the afternoon you witness the breakdown of the American family, exhaustion, hunger, not the happiest place on earth, but it is home to the Tower of Terror. How many of you have ridden the Tower of Terror? It is a haunted house ride that with computerized Engineering and Mechanics will give you an elevator ride.

Well, I saw it described one time as having the torque of 300 Corvette sports cars, self-propelled elevator cabs that can move sideways as well as up and down, and can accelerate and even simulate weightlessness at times, and all done to the satisfaction of the liability insurers and the Secretary of Agriculture the State of Florida. I don't know why strawberries and Tower of Terror all come under the same department of the state, but I guess if we began with the state fairs and the carnival rides, it's something to understand.

And the promise, the promise I saw one time along I-4 right next to Fairbanks Avenue, is the billboard of the Tower of Terror. It said, never the same fear twice. So all in the air conditioned comfort of the highly regulated mechanism of the Tower of Terror, you could have your boredom interrupted with ever variety, ever increasing variety of terror.

In fact, our whole economy in the Orlando area, at least a lot of it, is based on keeping people from being bored. And if you combine the entertainment industry, with the retirement industry in Florida, the backbone of our economy is probably less oranges and grapefruits and strawberries than it is keeping people from being bored who otherwise would be bored.

But here's the thing. Now, a lot of growing up is learning how to be bored. For example, a hungry six month old is not bored, and you can take a two year old, and they can go from the happiest happiness of life to the greatest unhappiness in about a half a second, and so we say, calm down. We say stop crying. And really raising children is just bringing that bandwidth in, right, and then a pension and a dependable job and good health insurance and retirement savings and Advent health is talking about the happy 100, you know, trying to stay healthy as long as we can. And so really, between financial security, long term health care

and the theme parks. Life really is about managing uncertainty and cultivating boredom, but just with enough interruptions that life is interesting until we die. Sometimes life interrupts the planned boredom, doesn't it? Sometimes life interrupts the cultivated boredom, sickness, relational disruptions, even death and and and financial need and poverty and job will. Stuff.

Sometimes life doesn't cooperate with our efforts to manage the boredom out of life, moments like what Mary met with Mary Magdalene when we read about her in John chapter 20, she is in the depths of despair, and the reason she's in the depths of despair is because she had put all of her hopes in Christ. Her whole life was given to her by Jesus, and the empty tomb drives her to at least momentarily, to despair. I want us to think about the open tomb this morning and what we read and ask you a question. In our cultivated boredom, in protecting ourselves from the agonies of life, as best we can do, we also inadvertently immunize ourselves from ecstasy in the bringing up of our exposure to fear and worry and concerns? Do we also lower the possibilities for happiness, for joy, for unutterable joy. To answer that question, I would like us to stand with Mary at the open tomb. She is the character that continues throughout the passage we read.

I would like to us to pay attention to the prepositions of this story at in out of the tomb of Jesus and ask the question, have we opened ourselves? Do we open ourselves? Will we accept the invitation of resurrection morning to open ourselves to unutterable, inexpressible joy. So let's look at the story together.

It's in three scenes. The first scene is found very briefly in the first two verses. We're told that on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was dark, well, it was dark, and it's important that we recognize that it's still dark. It's still in the haze or even the darkness of Good Friday. If you read John's gospel, he's a wonderful writer, not just a good historian. And we are told when Judas went out to betray Jesus, when Judas went out, it was night. And even though it's three days until the resurrection, John never talks about light or day until this moment you see, because the whole story is now shrouded in darkness, and so as a result, Mary is concerned but, but she has come searching. She's become searching for something.

And I, I want us to see, first of all, that Mary has come searching for glory. Now, why do I say that? Well, as I said, John is a wonderful writer. John's Gospel begins with the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his what Glory. Glory is the only begotten of God, full of grace and truth. So the whole story of John's gospel is the glory cloud come in the person of Jesus. Elder Philip read from the Book of Numbers about the glory cloud in the Old Testament. You remember the glory cloud in the Old Testament, when Israel was freed from Egypt and came to Mount Sinai, God came down upon Mount Sinai in the cloud and in the fire. And the people of Israel begged, Moses, you go up there. You go. Up there. They were terrified of the glory. Yet, even as they traveled through the wilderness, the glory cloud was over them. When it stopped, they stopped. When

it went forward, they went forward, and the glory of God was around them, protecting them, providing for them. And the glory of God dwelt among Israel. Of course, we know the Old Testament story is that the problem of a holy God dwelling in his glory among an unholy people leaves an irresolvable problem until the incarnation. You see what John's Gospel is saying, Sinai glory, as awesome as it was, was not the full revelation of the glory of God until the birth of Jesus. Sinai glory is not as glorious as servant glory you. That's how John's Gospel began. We're also told in John chapter one, verse five, and this is a spoiler alert, but perhaps you know how John's Gospel ends already. Anyway,

It says the light which enlightens every man has come into the world, and the darkness did not overcome it. Some older translations say the darkness did not comprehend it. The Book of John is not about a communication problem. The Book of John is about the light of God, the life of God, which is the light of God that comes into the world that gives life to everyone. It comes in battle against the darkness. And the whole story of John's gospel is the light of the world in battle against the darkness. And when Judas went out, it was dark, and the question became, did the darkness win?

But John, to allay our concerns from the very beginning, said, the darkness did not overcome the light, and now we see, as even in the in the emerging light of day, the light has come from the grave. The light won. And so yet Mary doesn't fully realize it. Now, who is Mary? This Mary that she comes to the tomb and sees the open tomb. Well, we don't know a lot about her. Luke tells us a bit about her, but she was one of the women who followed Jesus. But Luke tells us she was delivered from seven demons, and she became part of she was delivered by Jesus from seven demons, and she's always mentioned along with the other women who were followers of Jesus and and so she was among those for whom Peter spoke in John chapter six, Jesus said, Will you leave me also? Once the crowds had left him. Jesus said, Will you leave me as well? And Peter said, on behalf of all of them, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And on Resurrection morning, Mary is the first to report to the presence of Christ, even though she still thinks that he is in the tomb, because we read in verse two, when she sees that the tomb is dark, she ran and went to Simon, Peter and the other disciple, the one who Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb. We do not know where they have laid him. My point is that Mary came searching for the glory become flesh. Mary came searching for the glory of God. Now, men, you know this, there's a difference between going shopping and going buying, don't you.

Going shopping means you go and you're not sure what you're looking for. You're not sure where you'll find it. Mary wasn't going shopping. She was making a beeline to the one who had given her life, the one who had said, "I have come that I may give life and give it abundantly," and the one to whom all the disciples had said, "Who else are we going to go to? You're the only one who can give us

life.” She came looking for the glory of God, the light of God which enlightens everyone and gives life to the world.

Brothers and sisters, death is real.

Often we treat the Christian faith as an idea, a lifestyle, a moral code. We treat the Christian faith as something abstract. But then it happens. What happens? Life happens, and reality intrudes, and our managed boredom failed. Where do we go? Where else will we go? Mary knew nowhere else to go, because she knew him. She sought the glory. That's the first scene. The second scene is rumors of glory. This is in verses three through 10. Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. There's a little rivalry here, if you don't pick up on it, it's here. Peter went out with the other disciple. How does John know this? He's the other disciple. He's the one whom Jesus loved, the beloved disciple. We know that, right? John doesn't name himself as the author of this Gospel, but we know it's John. Peter, went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Verse four, both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter.

Now I don't know what you want to do with that, whether they you know when they did after action, you know, analysis coach, where John just observed that he outran Peter. He outran Peter and reached the tomb first, and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in.

He saw.

John is an eyewitness. This. All the Gospels depend upon the eyewitness accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. John looked in and saw. What did he see? He saw the linen cloth lying there. But he did not go in, well, because perhaps Simon lost the foot race. He decided to extend the finish line. And in verse six, it said, “Then Simon Peter came following him,” the winners write the history.

So Peter reached the tomb. Peter went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the faith face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloth, but folded up in a place by itself. Now don't imagine that the risen Christ is just like a good middle schooler who makes their bed in the morning. It's not what this is about. Why is this? Well, the last time somebody came out of a tomb in John's gospel, it was Lazarus, the brother of Mary and when he came out, he looked like what we might think of a mummy in some old horror movie. He came out with a grave cloth dragging around him. Why? Because the voice that raised the dead had told him to come out. What is that hymn? “Say new life the dead receive the mournful, broken hearts rejoice the humble poor. Believe that the voice which raises the dead had said, Lazarus come out.

And so Lazarus came out, still wrapped in his grave cloths. But the fact that the face cloth is carefully folded shows that this is a different order of a resurrection. And in fact, it is the resurrection of the one who said back in John chapter 10 about the Good Shepherd, the one who said, I lay down my life for my sheep.

"I have authority to lay it down,
and I have authority to pick it up again."

This is the one, not only who died for our sins, but who, according to his own power, His divinity, raised himself from the dead. This is not just your average everyday resurrection. This is the resurrection of resurrections. This is the resurrection by which all those who trust in Him are also raised. It's the reason we have hope. Paul says in first Corinthians 15, a chapter will be being preached all over the world today. "If Christ is not raised, our faith is in vain," but he was raised. He was raised. And so they see not just your ordinary, everyday resurrection, not your Monday resurrection, your Wednesday, but they see your Sunday morning resurrection.

The other disciple, verse eight, who had reached the tomb first, by the way, also went in and he saw and believed. "For as yet, they did not understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead." Back in chapter 12, when Jesus said "The hour has come that the Son of Man must be glorified," it says, when after he was glorified, they understood these things.

You see, nothing of the life of Jesus, nothing, in fact, of the whole Bible makes its ultimate sense, except on this side of the resurrection. Don't ever wish you could go back to the time before Jesus was raised. Don't ever wish you could stand there when he taught on Earth, because you. Blessed are those who not only believe, but who believe without seeing Jesus said, we stand in a better place than the apostles on Easter morning because of the testimony of Scripture.

This church was birthed out of a belief in that right? Was it 30 years ago that you met in the armory for the first time? Was it what, 28 years ago? It's getting close and it was hot and I was there, but it's because you believe the testimony of the apostles. But before they saw him, they did not yet fully understand. They did not quite understand. Psalm 16, said, "He will not allow His Holy One to undergo decay." Psalm 16, verse 10.

Then the disciples went back to their homes.

The disciples went back to their homes. In the next chapter, we find Peter fishing again, but not Mary.

But not Mary.

Mary stayed at the tomb.

Listen, brothers and sisters, there are no longer just rumors.

They're not. It's not any longer the fog of sunrise. It's not any longer the ambiguities of that momentary situation when the tomb was empty but he has not been seen. We are no longer there. There's no going back once, once you have met the risen Christ, there is no going back, though none go with me. Still. Shall I follow? No turning back, no turning back.

And Mary did not turn back. It's a solemn thing. It's a weighty thing. I tell my students this all the time. You want to stand up in front of God's people and tell them how to live their lives. So you need a license. You need to learn. You need to have character. You know all the things we care about, right? And our elders and our pastors and our our deacons as well. Why?

Because Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead."

Jesus said, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back as fit for the kingdom of God." Listen, if you have met the risen Christ, there's no turning back. But by the same token, there's no back way. There's no way back because He alone has life. He alone has gained victory over the grave.

You I realize I've spent my whole life, every pastor, every elder, believes this and says it to you, Stake your hopes on Christ. He will never leave you or forsake you. That's a big check to write, but God wrote the check when he raised Jesus from the dead.

I know you have other options. Many turned away. The crowd that met Jesus on Palm Sunday disappeared. You don't go back. Don't turn back if you've just started on the road, if you've been on it, there's no hope. There's no hope. But there is in Christ.

This is the Christian faith.

Our hope is not in our financial security. Our hope is not in our educational accomplishments, our hope is not in our politics.

Our hope is in the risen Christ.

When the hope is in the risen Christ, all the things of earth grow strangely dim. Has anybody witnessed that?

Mary, she didn't go home. She searched for the glory, and she stood fast amidst the rumors of the glory. The last thing I want us to see is in verses 11 through 18, Mary meets the glory. Mary meets the glory. It says she stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb, and she saw two

angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. If time allowed, or if we had the Sunday school class afterward, we could take the time to look at what's the significance of the two angels here. Well, John's Gospel began by telling us that Jesus was the tabernacle of God. Jesus is the true tabernacle of God. John, chapter two tells us Jesus is the final temple of God, not a stone temple built on Mount Zion, but Jesus himself. That's what he told the woman at the well in John chapter four, not on Gerizim, not on Mount Zion. In the spirit, the Bible said that's where we will worship God forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. Jesus was the tabernacle of God, the true tabernacle of God. And if we begin to think about the tabernacle as we read John's gospel, our minds are taken back to numbers and Exodus and all the other passages that talk about the tabernacle.

And so where did two angels appear in the tabernacle? They appeared over the Ark of the Covenant. Well, what was the Ark of the Covenant? The Ark of the Covenant was the throne of God. It was his footstool. It was his battle chariot. Numbers chapter 10, and it was where the mercy seat was found, the propitiatory cover, the place where the blood of the spotless lamb was sprinkled one day a year to atone for the sins of the people. It's not strange that we would find two angels where Jesus had once laid, because he is the propitiation for our sins.

He is everything that the tabernacle foreshadowed, including the forgiveness of sins. So while those two angels and they're bearing witness. They said, Woman, "why are you weeping?" She says, "they've taken away my lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. We're waiting now for the big reveal, but it doesn't happen, does it? Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Ask her the same question as the angels, but he goes beyond. He says, Whom are you seeking? See, Mary wasn't seeking a what she was seeking a who.

The person of Jesus.

And it says, 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."

Now, little bit of a chuckle here. If you only knew one of my great heroes, center fielder, Hall of Fame for the St Louis Cardinals, Willie McGee, once he was such a humble guy. He showed up for a banquet in his honor, and he was standing in line to buy a ticket.

And somebody said, "You look familiar."

He said, "Well, yeah, this is for me."

I mean, it's a bit of a chuckle, isn't it, but it's more going on. John doesn't waste any details. This scene is taking place in a garden. We were told back in the

previous chapter that the place where they laid him, even the place where he was crucified, had a garden surrounding him.

Well in the ancient world, one of the titles, besides Shepherd and King and many others, one of the titles sometimes ascribed to the gods was gardener, because ancient temples would often be surrounded by ornate gardens. You've heard of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Ancient Wonders of the World. But more than that, the first man was a gardener. The first Adam God formed the Garden of Eden, and he placed the man or the woman, and he gave them the garden to keep it and to serve it. So let's step back. The whole biblical story begins in a garden, and Zion.

Up in a wilderness, but the resurrection ends in a garden. John is full of creation references. Right there six creation miracles, there's bread, there's water, there's all that in John's Gospel. How does it begin? Let's see, how does it begin? Oh, it begins in the beginning. It sounds just like the book of Genesis.

We are seeing here the restoration, the beginning of the new creation brought about by the second Adam, who makes all things new, makes dead things live, makes dry places flow, fills the hungry with good things, as Mary said in Luke chapter one.

That's not even the best part.

Jesus said to her, verse 16, Jesus said to her, "Mary."

And we immediately recognize her. Recognition, because she says, in Aramaic, she says, rabboni. Now that's a word for teacher. He was her teacher, but she doesn't understand him only as a teacher, because when she runs back and tells the other disciples in verse 18, she says, I have seen the Lord, but when he called her by her name, she called him by the name which she had known him by.

Again, back in John chapter 10, Jesus said,

"My sheep, hear my voice? I know my sheep and my sheep HEAR MY VOICE and they FOLLOW me. Have you heard by the Holy Spirit? The Good Shepherd speaks your name. He knows you by name, and he says, "no one will ever snatch you out of my hand." He said, I lay down my life for my sheep. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again, and he has.

Mary goes back, testifies to the apostles, who, in turn testify to the whole world about the risen Christ. Nothing will ever be the same once you hear His voice.

Mary sought the glory. She searched for it.

She heard rumors of it. She thought it might be true, and then she met the glory when he called her by her name.

I joked at the beginning, and I said, you know, success, I find often is lowering expectations. But you know, that's what this whole story is about? C S Lewis writes about it in his essay, "The Weight of Glory" that people don't even talk in polite company about the possibility of infinite joy.

Because if you mention it, you might expect it, and if you expect infinite joy, you're just going to be disappointed. If you expect ecstasy, you'll just be let down. But you see, the risen Christ says, "No." The Risen Christ says, "Open your mind, because God can do and is doing more than we ask or imagine." His incomprehensible love is what we are supposed to spend our whole life contemplating its height and breadth and width.

Once you have met the risen Christ, you can't go back,

Nor would you ever want to.

One of my favorite short stories. I guess it probably gets mentioned all over the place on Easter morning. It's a short story that first that taught me how to love to read again. You know how college teaches you to hate reading? Well, this story taught me to love reading once again after college. It's Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find." And in it there's an escaped convict who encounters a grandmother and some children, and he's wanting to hijack them and he's contemplating violence against them. And the grandmother says, "Jesus will help you. Jesus will help you." And it's one of the most beautiful soliloquies in English literature.

The Misfit is his name in the story, the misfit begins to contemplate Jesus. "Jesus," he said, "It ain't fair. It ain't fair. If Jesus was raised from the dead, there's nothing to do to throw away everything and follow him. But I wasn't there. It's not fair. If I was there, I'd know, but I wasn't there."

And so if he wasn't raised from the dead, there's nothing but meanness.

Brothers and sisters, we're there. Mary has told us John and Peter have borne witness. We know he was raised from the dead, and that means there's nothing, nothing else to do, and Easter Sunday is a good time to start, but throw away everything and follow him.

Will you?

Will you seek the glory?

Will you meet the glory?

Michael Glodo is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at RTS Orlando.

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