

John 20:11-18

I Ascend

Proposition: *Seek the ascended Christ!*

Introduction: Whom are you seeking?

Whom are you seeking? That's the question Jesus asks Mary at the empty garden tomb. She'd come early to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus one last time. We can conclude from this that Mary was seeking a corpse of a dead man, but nevertheless *this* man—the Savior, Jesus, yet dead and buried. And despite all expectation, here he is, *alive*. And in his mouth is a word as much a promise as it is a statement of fact: "I ascend." Christ aims to lift her gaze heavenward, and by grace he is doing the same today. You don't find Christ if you seek him in the graves of men. He's alive. Therefore, let us lift up our eyes—lift up your heart, O Church—to seek the ascended Christ!

I. If Christ is dead, we have no comfort.

- a. The Grave in the Garden (Ge. 2:17; Ro. 5:12; 1 Co. 15:14, 17)
 - i. No one saw the resurrection coming.
 - ii. Ever since Genesis 3, the children of Adam *despair* of anything better than anointing the corpse of their hope in a garden of graves.
- b. The Mourner and the Missing Body (Ps. 43:2-5; So. 3:2; So. 5:5, 6)
 - i. Mary like the forlorn lover in Song of Solomon—comfortless.
 - ii. The sudden appearance of Christ so exceeds her withered hopes that she mistakes him for someone else—but not for long. The Christ of all comfort won't let her.

II. If Christ is risen, we have certain hope.

- a. Hope in union with the God-Man (Ro. 6:5)
 - i. *Because Christ reconciles us to God in the flesh.* (Co. 1:20)
 1. Making peace with God for his saints. (Ro. 5:1)
 2. Making intercession for his saints. (Hb. 7:25)
 - ii. *Because Christ the Father receives Christ in the flesh.* (Ac. 3:21)
 1. Welcoming us into a forever family. (Ro. 8:15; Hb. 2:11)
 2. Preparing for us a forever home. (Jn. 14:3; 17:24)
 - iii. *Becoming partakers in his life.* (Jn. 3:36; 5:24)
 - iv. *Becoming partakers in his righteousness.* (2 Co. 5:21)
- b. Hope in the promise of the Second Man (Ac. 2:24; 1 Co. 15:47, 49)
 - i. Passed from dead death into eternal life! (Ro. 6:9; 1 Co. 15:42, 54; Hb. 2:14, 15; Rv. 1:18)
 - ii. Untemptable and ready for glory! (1 Co. 10:13; Jd. 24, 25)
 - iii. Sinless and natively holy! (Ro. 6:10; 1 Pt 1:15, 16; 2:9)
 - iv. Free from misery and destined for joy! (Is. 65:17-19; Rv. 21:4)

III. If Christ is ascended, we have great joy.

- a. Joy in knowing him. (Ro. 12:2)
 - i. *Jesus calls us by name out of hopeless delusions, transforming us by the renewing of our minds according to the truth of himself.*
- b. Joy in obeying him. (Co. 3:1-4)
 - i. *Jesus commands us to set our affection on heavenly things and commissions us to teach one another the truth about himself, principally that he is ascended to our God and Father.*
- c. Joy in waiting for him. (Ep. 2:6; Jn. 14:1-3, 16; Co. 2:15; Ti. 2:13)
 - i. *Jesus confirms for us our ascended identity in glory, comforts us with his Spirit, commences preparations for our warm reception, and conquers his enemies and ours—namely indwelling sin, the world, and Satan.*

IV. Conclusion

- a. *Weep no more!* Christ died for your sins, and he lives for your righteousness. This is sure hope that no one can take away from you.
- b. *Take heart, and never underestimate Christ!* If you fear you don't see Christ as clearly as you ought, or you feel he is far removed, or taken from you, Christ will not let you to suffer long in darkness. He hides himself but for a moment. Your name will soon drop tenderly from his tongue, and you will know him.
- c. *You have a God, a Father in heaven!* Once you were his enemy, but now he is your Father. Peace with God means he will not delay long over you, nor fail to vindicate you when Christ returns. All his thought toward his saints is compassion for the sake of Christ, whose brethren we are according to the flesh in his death and resurrection.
- d. *Go tell your brothers and sisters!* Our Lord's commission is for you, and your brothers and sisters need encouragement, always need reminding that he is risen and indeed ascended until he comes in glory.
- e. *If he ascended, he will surely return!* If he ascended in the flesh, it is as good as a promise that he will surely return in the flesh to bring you to be with him where he is. He will not leave you alone here. He will soon return to bring you to his Father's heaven in warm welcome forever.
- f. *Rejoice in his ascension!* The ascended Christ calls us out of despair, into joy. Let us *know* him and the power of his resurrection. Let us *serve* him with gladness. Let us *wait* for him with zeal for godliness.