



LESSON 3 ALL AGE TALK

THE EMPTY TOMB: "MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER"

JOHN 20:1-18



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This short all age service will explore John's account of the resurrection in 3 sections, focusing on what Jesus said to Mary and how that helps us understand more of what Christ's resurrection achieved. The aim is for the audience to hear that Jesus has risen to new life so that we can know God as our Father. We can now be part of God's family.

Part 1 – Unexpected – *discovering something different – the tomb was empty, not what Peter, John or Mary expected.*

Part 2 – All the evidence – *there's a mystery to be solved at the empty tomb – what is your conclusion?*

Part 3 – Back home – *Jesus says we can call God Father, we can be part of God's family.*

Helpers needed: actors to play Mary, John and Peter. (If you don't have actors, use wooden spoons to represent the characters.)

Props: A selection of containers with unexpected contents; items to make a "home" scene, e.g. chair, lamp and cushion; items to make an "empty tomb" scene, e.g. cardboard box, pop up tent, large bin on its side with cloths inside; a crown to wear to act as Jesus (or a wooden spoon wrapped in foil if you are using spoons); Paddington film clip; paper doll chain.

Set-up: arrange home and empty tomb props on opposite sides of the room.

Welcome

Song 1

Thine be the glory, risen conquering son

A song that your congregation is familiar with that focuses on the good news of the resurrection



Notes



Part 1 – Unexpected

Have a number of items ready to play “That was unexpected!”

- An ice cream tub filled with lettuce
- A tube of smarties filled with coins
- An Easter egg carton – with a rugby ball inside
- A biscuit tin – filled with a sewing kit

Hold up the objects and ask the audience – what do you expect to find inside? People should give the expected answer, e.g. ice cream in the ice cream tub, biscuits in the biscuit tin. After people have made suggestions, open each one and reveal the surprise.

Make the link

There were unexpected things inside all of those items, now you have to work out what you think about it – is it good news, or bad news? Are you happy or annoyed? Expecting ice cream and finding lettuce isn't great if you were looking for a pudding. Expecting smarties and finding enough money to buy 10 more tubes is not so bad.

Today we see three of Jesus' really good friends heading out to visit his grave. They saw him die on Friday, they knew where he had been buried, they went to visit, but they didn't find what they expected. What will they make of it all?

As we listen to the very beginning of the story of the first Easter morning, imagine the scene. It was so early that it was still dark. Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' friends, was going to the tomb where Jesus' dead body had been laid. Listen to this short reading. Afterwards I am going to ask you what Mary expected to find...

READING: John 20:1-2

Turn to your neighbour. What do you think Mary was expecting to find that morning?

Give them 20 seconds. Take a few answers if you want.

You've got it: Jesus' dead body.

How often do you lose things? Favourite teddy, school bag, car keys, phone? Hands up if you've said, "I can't find my phone, shoes, keys" this week? One thing you can say about a dead body is that you don't usually lose it - it stays where it is left. But not for Mary that day. We heard what she was thinking, "Someone has taken the body! I don't know where it is."

Mary found something she didn't expect, she thought someone had taken Jesus' body, so she felt really sad. We're going to follow Mary's story and - I promise - there is a happy ending. You may already know what it is!

Song 2

Super Saviour – Colin Buchannan / He has risen – Awesome Cutlery

A children's song that the congregation can sing together which celebrates the resurrection.



Part 2 – All the evidence

This section uses the home and empty tomb scenes that have been arranged. Have helpers to act as the characters or use three large wooden spoons with faces drawn on them.

READING: John 20:3-10

There was a lot of running around and finding things in that story, so we're going to take it one step at a time.

Mary – Left home first, (head from home to tomb), early in the morning while it was still dark. She went to the tomb and found the stone had been removed from the entrance. That's not what she expected! Shocked, she ran back home (head back across the room), and told Peter and John; "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him."

Peter and John – So Peter and John raced to the tomb, (run from one side to the other). John was in the lead, he won the race. It's his gospel, he makes sure to tell us that he was the fastest - I don't think he even told Peter it was a race! When they got to the tomb, John didn't go in. Peter did. Peter saw...

- The empty tomb, the moved stone – *point to the tomb and stone*
- The grave clothes lying inside – *lift out the strips of cloth*

After Peter had looked, John looked too. He saw the same things and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Peter didn't yet believe it. Nor did Mary. We don't all have to believe at the same time or at the same pace.

The Holy Spirit shows some of us the truth in different ways and at different times. Let's be praying for each other, for the Spirit to do that work to allow us to believe.

What about you? What is your explanation for the empty tomb? The moved stone? The grave clothes left behind? The missing body? Do you believe in the risen Jesus, defeating death, never to die again? That is the story of the first Easter. But we're not quite done yet - it gets even better!

Song 3

**Oh Praise the name of the Lord our God – Hillsong /
Christ our hope in life and death - Gettys**

Song about what the resurrection means for us / our response



Part 3 – Back home



Notes

READING: John 20:11-18

Mary was back at the tomb (*Mary go from home to tomb*) with no idea what was going on, crying her eyes out and talking to angels who asked her why she was crying – that felt like a stupid question! Then the gardener arrived – (*put the crown on / hold up the sparkly spoon*). At least Mary thought he was the gardener...

When the “gardener” said her name, Mary realised who he was. I love that detail. It was him saying her name that did it. If you’re trusting Jesus, one day he will say your name and you will be overjoyed, you will smile and you will know exactly who he is. Mary was so pleased to see Jesus, that she gave him a huge hug - she must have wanted to never let him go!

But Jesus had something amazing to say to Mary. He said, “You have to let me go, because I am on my way back to my Father God in Heaven. Go and tell my disciples that I am alive. Soon I will go back to my Father, and your Father. My God, and your God.”

Listen carefully to that - ‘My Father and your Father. My God and your God’. Jesus told Mary that she could call God Father, just like he does. She was part of God’s family, just as much as Jesus is – WOW!

If you’ve seen the film Paddington, you’ll know that it’s the story of him being taken in by the Browns. He causes chaos, he floods the house, and the father, Mr Brown, is far from convinced that he should stay. But by the end, Mr Brown welcomes Paddington into the family, treating him like his own son, in a bear way. Watch for the difference it makes to Paddington.

Show the first minute of this clip here

[Paddington | A Letter to Aunt Lucy | Friendly Faces](#)

A Licence may be needed from www.uk.ccli.com

“Home!” That’s what Paddington says, “Home!”

To all who are trusting in him, Jesus says, “My Father and your Father.” We have been brought into the family. We are home. It doesn’t just change a little detail of what we do for one day a week. It changes who we are, how we feel, our sense of belonging knowing we can call God our Father.

We know that Jesus completely belongs with God the Father (*hold up a three person paper chain – reveal two connected figures, keep one held back*). He is as good and perfect as his Father is. But now Jesus says that everyone who trusts in his finished saving work on the cross, as different as we are from God, can completely belong in God’s family (*reveal the third person connected*). That’s what the resurrection does - it shows us for certain that Jesus has finished the job he came to do and has brought us home to his Father.

Mary doesn’t need to hold on to Jesus as this is not the end of the story. Jesus is on his way back to his throne in heaven. So even when Mary is away from Jesus, she is safe because God is *her* Father.

To be a Christian is to have a forever Father, our Father, who changes our story. He will always be with us, he is always good, and one day we will go home to be with him forever because of Jesus.

A family to lead the prayers

Concluding thought



Notes

Read John 20:18 again

Mary is so sure about Jesus' resurrection that she runs back to the other disciples and bursts in to share the news - "I have seen the Lord!" Mary saw the risen Jesus, she knew for certain that he is alive and that his Father is our Father. Let us believe her words and feel her joy as we celebrate Easter together.

Optional pause for conversation around some questions if you feel this is appropriate in your setting. The questions could appear on a slide if you have that facility.

I've got a few questions that we can use to help each other think about this. Turn to your neighbour and pick a question to talk about for a few minutes.

Under 7's - How do we know that Jesus is alive? What makes you sure?

7-11 - When was the saddest that you have ever felt? Does God as your Father help in that sadness?

11-18 - Is there one excitement or one question or one doubt that you leave with?

Adults - From the resurrection story - do you have something to thank God for or a prayer for this year?

Final Song

10,000 reasons - Matt Redman / Amazing grace - public domain

Closing Prayer





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