

24 Hours That Changed the World by Adam Hamilton
Session 7 Christ the Victor

Session Goals:

- Explore the Gospel's account of Jesus' victory over death on Easter morning and of what happened prior to his appearance to the disciples;
- Consider the incredible promise of Easter: the hope of life after death;
- Examine the *Christus Victor* theory of the Atonement and what it might mean for our lives.

Opening Prayer -

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3)

Biblical Foundation

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here."

(Mark 16:1-6)

Watch the Video (11:10 minutes) Questions for Discussion -

- Recall some of the sites you have seen these last few weeks: Gethsemane, the pit beneath Caiaphas' house, the whipping post, the stone pavement, the Stone of Unction, the Garden Tomb. How has seeing these sites and objects informed your understanding of what Jesus means for you? For the world?

- Consider the stark contrast between Lenin's tomb in Moscow (a body encased in glass: and Christ's tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (a small piece of stone encased in glass). What does that say to you about the human condition and the power of God?

- In John's Gospel, the risen Christ appears in a garden and is mistaken for a gardener. If we are called to participate with Jesus, the Gardener, in restoring and bringing healing to the original garden of our world, what might that look like in your life?

Bible Study and Discussion:

Acts 9:1-18

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." ¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in

Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” ¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” ¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,

- The Bible describes how Paul himself had an encounter with the resurrected Christ, an encounter that completely transformed him. In what ways would you say your experience with the risen Christ has changed you?

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

¹ Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

- In these verses, Paul powerfully and succinctly proclaims the gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Summarize what you understand Paul to be saying and how that message grounds your own faith in Jesus.

1 Peter 3:18-20

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.

- Consider the idea that Jesus sought out those most alienated from God, even in the realm of the dead. How might this idea contribute to your understanding of Jesus’ mission in the world?

Wrapping Up-In Perspective

To conclude the session, ask group members to consider and discuss one or more of the following perspectives. For the painting, Burnand’s *Disciples Peter And John Rushing To The Sepulcher*, google it or print out a color copy and display it or pass it around for the group to see.

AT THE TOMB OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, known to Eastern Orthodox Christians as the Church of the Resurrection, encompasses both the place where Jesus was crucified and the tomb where he was buried and from which he was raised. Most scholars believe this site (and not the so-called Garden Tomb) is likely to be the place Jesus was crucified and buried. The church’s rotunda marks what remains of the place believed to be Jesus’ tomb, with the shrine (or *edicule*) containing the Chapel of the Angel. In that room is a piece of rock believed to be part of the stone the angels rolled away from the tomb entrance. Put yourself in front of the stone, now rolled away from where Jesus once lay dead. Touch the stone. Walk in side the cool, dank tomb. Look around. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear?

IN THE EYES OF:

Joseph of Aramathea (Mark 15:42-46)

⁴² It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

- Imagine you are Joseph. You are about to handle the lifeless body of Jesus and transport him to a burial place you own. Not a single one of those who followed Jesus when he was alive is around to help you. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? What are you thinking?

Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1-10)

²⁸ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." ⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

- Imagine you are Mary Magdalene. You saw the lifeless body of Jesus and watched Joseph of Arimathea take it away. But now you have arrived at the tomb, and the stone is rolled away from the entrance. Someone is telling you that Jesus is alive. You stumble away in shock. What do you see? Hear? Feel? What are you thinking?

Cleopas (Luke 24:13-35)

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." ²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

- Imagine you are Cleopas. You have been eating with a stranger who seems familiar to you. All of a sudden you know who he is. What do you see? Hear? Feel? What are you thinking?

Doubting Thomas (John 20:19-29)

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." ²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though 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; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- Imagine you are Thomas. You have heard your fellow disciples talk about seeing Jesus, but you are not buying it. You will believe it when you see Jesus. Suddenly, there he is! What do you see? Hear? Feel? What are you thinking?

IN FRONT OF BURNAND'S *DISCIPLES PETER AND JOHN RUSHING TO THE SEPULCHER*

In this painting the Swiss Realism artist Eugene Burnand has captured the moment just after Mary Magdalene has reported to the disciples that Jesus' tomb is empty. Here are Peter and John, looking and leaning forward, like the clouds and the horizon line, toward their destination: the empty tomb. The men's facial expressions and body postures reveal some of their feelings. What story does the artist want us to experience in this scene?

Sharing Joys & Concerns

Closing Prayer

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

Closing Hymn (optional)

To conclude your study of Jesus' last day, consider standing together and singing Isaac Watts' famous hymn, the words of which are printed below.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God;
all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

From "**When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,**"
in *The United Methodist Hymnal*
(Copyright 1989 by The United Methodist Publishing House); 298.