



## HG218: Our Hope Is Found In: **The Resurrection**

John 20:19-31

Home Group Study Notes

11 April 2021 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and other  
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



### **Welcome** (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

In what ways, if any, has your Home Group, and particularly this series on Hope, helped you during this difficult year living through a pandemic?



### **Looking Upwards** (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon

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**Introduction** For many people Easter is about chocolate eggs Easter bunnies and a bank holiday weekend. Many find it hard believe that one man's death could atone for their sins especially when they don't believe they are sinful. We know that people who have been dead for 3 days, let alone someone who has been tortured, crucified, speared and pronounced dead, don't return to life, it makes no sense. Sadly we have all become much more acquainted with death over the last year, we know how difficult it is to defeat a virus. Even with all the NHS resources and scientific advancements death is a tough opponent and people don't come back from the dead, and Thomas knew this too. In fact 1 week before this incident prior to Jesus appearing to the other disciples on Easter Sunday, the others would have said the same, when you are dead you're dead! The Christian hope is in the resurrection, but many find that hope elusive. We are all different and faith comes in different ways, times and intensities and just like Thomas, some people need more evidence but we also see here how Jesus is willing to adapt to people's needs. Thomas needed to see concrete evidence and so Jesus provided it by appearing to him.

**The Peace of God** This was Jesus 3rd appearance since he was placed in the tomb, he had first appeared to Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, then later in that day to the other disciples, Thomas was absent, but now they were all together again. They were in hiding, afraid and with the door locked and into that fear Jesus appeared in the room with them. He said, "Peace be with you," not to be mistaken as a feeling of peace and tranquility and a belief that God will shield us from life's hard knocks, because of course we know that's not true. The peace that Jesus offers us is a pardon for our sins, reconciliation and peace with God because God is no longer angry with us. The Gospel message of peace resolves the issue of God's wrath that many refuse to believe in and reject today but when Jesus stood before them and showed them his hands and his side he was telling them of the peace that he had won for them and what it had cost him.

**Confess Christ is Lord** Thomas has been mentioned twice before in scripture, in John 11 and John 14.5 but he is best known for expressing his doubts when the disciples told him they had, "seen the Lord." Thomas was never going to take someone else's word for it that Jesus was alive and so he said that unless he saw Jesus with his own eyes he wouldn't believe, v25, and as soon as he said that, Jesus appeared and stood before him inviting him to place his hands in his wounds.

In that instant everything changed for Thomas, Jesus was no longer simply his Rabbi friend and teacher, Jesus was his God standing before him and he made his declaration of faith saying, "My Lord and my God." God showed Himself to Thomas in the Person of Jesus Christ and Jesus received Thomas's worship without reserve as it was his right. This is the only time in the Gospel that someone speaking to Jesus addresses him as God and John's gospel comes full circle echoing his first verse, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Poor Thomas has been forever known as Doubting Thomas but his doubts had a purpose, he wanted to know the truth and once he'd seen proof with his own eyes he believed. We shouldn't be afraid of expressing our doubts but like Thomas we should use our doubts to ask questions and to find answers. Jesus said to Thomas "Because you have seen me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Was he scolding Thomas? He'd certainly blessed Thomas by showing himself to him but Jesus implies here that those who believe in spite of not having seen will receive even greater blessings.

**Our Confidence in the Gospel** This HG series has been all about the hope we have in Christ. In his glory, his Holy Spirit, in scripture, in prayer and his resurrection and without that hope and knowing him as Saviour and Lord, there is no hope, we are adrift, alone and without hope. John says in v 31 that the purpose of writing his book is that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing we may have life in his name and it is no accident that John writes this immediately after he records the resurrection. Jesus' victory over death is our confidence in eternal life that becomes ours and flows through our spiritual veins when we are placed in Christ through our faith and our commitment to him and as the Father raised Jesus, we who are in Christ are raised with him. Everything changes when we place our trust in Jesus and accept him as Lord and Saviour. We are adopted into a new family, become a child of God and enter into an intimate eternal relationship with our Abba Father. Gal 4:26 says "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ."

**Our Confidence in God's Goodness** We have had a pretty awful year and it may have prompted us at times to ask the questions "Why?" "Where is God in this?" and "Is God good?" We only have to look at the cross and see Jesus ask the same question to his Father when he said, "My God My God why have you forsaken me," (Matt 27:46), and every such cry echoed from Psalm 22 that has ever been cried, is summed up and fulfilled at calvary in Jesus in a single moment of tortured horror. He felt totally abandoned and forsaken as he suffered alone and died in our place and in that moment we see both Father and Son obedient to the choice they had made and both are suffering. One is dying whilst the other watches, all because of their love for us, and we know then that God is good and can be trusted. God is for us right there in Christ as he died.

**Our Confidence in the Love of Christ** As Jesus had prepared to go to the cross John says in Ch 13.1, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them, to the end."

Jesus knew what was ahead of him, yet out of love for us he kept on going. Up to this point communion with his father had been constant, he did nothing without the Father, and to know that that connection and closeness with his Father would be severed would have been unimaginable for Jesus and yet he carried on out of love for his own. We love until we are betrayed, let down or hurt. When we look at the cross we can be confident that Jesus does not love like we do. His love carries the weight of human sin, bears its punishment and endures death on our behalf and so we know that whatever we go through, he will be right alongside us and that he will love us to the end because he simply cannot do otherwise. We are safe in his hands in this life and we have a promise of a future with him in the next.

Last Sunday was Easter day, a day in the calendar that Christians look forward to celebrate the Risen Lord Jesus but Easter 2021 gave people all over the UK hope as everyone began to look forward to Easter with the hope of becoming free of the restrictions that had kept us all locked in. It's maybe just co-incidence, but the other time that we all really looked forward to with hope last year was Christmas day. We were all just hanging on in the hope that we would be able to spend time with our families but that was not to be and so locked in people all over the country have looked forward to Easter and being set free.....and that, after all is what Easter is all about. It is about a God who loves us, who died for us and who set us free by dying for us, cancelling out our sins and reconciling us to himself through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. The freedom and life that the vaccine offers us is good but it's nothing compared to the freedom Christ won for us through his death and unless our freedom comes from the Gospel Good News of Jesus Christ we will always remain imprisoned because real freedom comes from belonging to Jesus Christ.

**Hope for the World** Christ died in our place and it is in him that we see what God is like and when we accept Him as Lord and Saviour a new sense of security and safety enters into our lives. We know that we are loved and that he is always with us. Even when we are in despair and life has lost all meaning, it is Jesus and the Good News of the Gospel that offers hope and that can lift us up and out of despair and shows us that there is a future when he is in it with us. He will never turn anyone away, no one is out of his reach, outside his love and beyond the redemptive power of the gospel.

Jesus Christ is the answer for a broken culture and a lost world and although all the other things that the church does today are good and part of his mission to serve, like the Food-banks and community projects, it is the Good News message that people need. People need Christ and the hope he offers. Just as Jesus here commissions and sends out his disciples, v21, so he sends us and we go as he did, in obedience to the Father, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the message of salvation. We don't need to have all the answers, we just need to know and love Jesus and above all people need to see him in us and the effect he has on our lives. Thomas's doubts were just his starting place, his encounter with the Risen Jesus changed him forever and unless we too are able to share personal knowledge of Jesus and not simply what we have read about him, then our witness will be powerless.

The disciples were changed from a group of lost and fearful men into mighty fearless warriors and proclaimers of the Gospel and they went on to change the world because of their personal encounter with the Risen Christ. Even Doubting Thomas is reputed to have travelled to India to preach the Gospel and was allegedly martyred in AD72.

**Our Confidence in the Resurrection** John tells us that Jesus last words were “It is finished” (Jn 19:30) and for Thomas and the other disciples as they hid away in that room that is how it must have felt to them, the journey with Jesus was finished. The heady days of miracles and crowds and being a part of something amazing and world changing had come to an abrupt and shocking end and Jesus was dead. Friday was unbearable, Saturday filled with despair as the reality set in and dreams were shattered. They were utterly lost, bereft and without hope. Then Easter morning came and God the Father called Jesus Christ the Beloved Son out of the grave and hope took flight as the Risen Lord and Saviour got up and walked out of that tomb. Without the resurrection there is no Gospel, without the resurrection, our faith is useless, without the resurrection we would still be condemned by our sin, and without the resurrection, everything we believe about God and salvation would be empty and meaningless. On Good Friday, they thought it was all over, in fact, it had only just begun.

It’s said that sometime in the 1930’s a Communist leader called Bukharin went from Moscow to Kiev to address a huge assembly. His subject was atheism. For a solid hour he fired his arguments at the crowd and ridiculed Christianity. At last he was finished and viewed what seemed to be the smouldering ashes of the people’s faith. “Are there any questions?” Bukharin demanded. A solitary man arose and asked permission to speak. He mounted the platform and moved close to the Communist leader. The audience was breathlessly silent as the man surveyed them, first to the right, then to the left. At last he shouted the ancient Orthodox greeting, “CHRIST IS RISEN!” The vast assembly arose as one person and the response came crashing back like the sound of an avalanche, “HE IS RISEN INDEED!”

**Hallelujah, what a Saviour....** Death does not win, God wins, no pandemic will ever win because God wins. Jesus has had the last word. That first Easter weekend Jesus Christ defeated the power of death once and for all, he is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last the Beginning and the End, the King has come and he is coming again, in him we have hope in this life and of a life everlasting with him in the next. He is the Anchor of our souls and it is in him alone, in Christ Alone, that we have hope.

## **Emmanuel Church Text for 2021**

*“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul,  
firm and secure.”*

**Hebrews 6:19**



## **Looking Upwards** (40 mins)

### *Bible Study*

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1.** The disciples lives were radically changed by the resurrection. How has the resurrection of Jesus changed your life? If the resurrection had never happened, would your life be any different?

**2.** In what ways do others see the effect that Jesus and his resurrection has on you?

**3.** I know we have been in lockdown most of this last year but generally, do you spend much time pursuing those who don't know Jesus?

**4.** Why is it so important that we rely on the promises and character of God rather on our feelings?

**5.** Jesus said that we are blessed because we believe without seeing. Are there any doubts that you struggle with that you find difficult to resolve and move on from?

**6.** In what ways might your daily life change if the resurrection was in the forefront of your mind every day?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## **Looking Inwards** (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



## **Looking Outwards** (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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