

Subject: *Changed by the Risen Lord*

Scripture: *John 20:11-31*

Someone asked a man well into his 90s, “Sir, you’ve seen a lot of changes in your life, haven’t you?” He said, “Yes I have and I’ve been against every one of them.” People don’t always like change, but some changes are for the good. Jesus came to this world to seek and save the lost. He came to change the lives of sinners one at a time.

After Jesus rose from the dead He appeared to many believers and they were changed forever. Jesus is still in the business of changing lives. One believer said “I’m not what I ought to be and I’m not what I am going to be, but thank God, I’m not what I used to be.” He can change the hardest and coldest hearts. Chuck Swindoll tells of a well-educated British lawyer who set out to write a book that would disprove the idea that Jesus rose from the dead. Instead, he ended up writing a book called *Who Moved the Stone?* in which he defended the bodily resurrection of Christ. He testified that he could no longer write the book he had first intended. He said that a change of heart happened “not suddenly, as in a flash of light or inspiration, but slowly by the very stubbornness of the facts themselves.” Notice the changes that happened when people encountered the risen Lord.

1. The Lord changed Mary Magdalene from sorrow to joy (vs. 11-18)

Some of us know how Mary felt standing and weeping at the grave of a loved one or dear friend. She thought someone had taken Jesus’ body from the tomb, but she didn’t know who or where. When she looked inside the tomb again she saw two angels and they spoke to her. At the same time Jesus appeared to her, but she didn’t recognize Him at first. She may not have been able to see Him because her eyes were blurry from crying, and He was now glorified and the last time she saw His body it was bleeding and torn. Then He called her by name and she knew it was Him. This brings to mind what Jesus said in **John 10:27** *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* Jesus told her not to cling to Him because He had to ascend back to the Father. This He would do 40 days later. Then Jesus told her to go and tell the disciples, but now He called them “brethren.” He had called them servants, then friends, and now brothers. Because He made the perfect sacrifice for sins, this new relationship is possible. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Mary came to the empty tomb with heavy heart, but she left with a spring in her step and a message to share with the disciples.

2. The Lord changed the disciples from fear to confidence (vs. 19-23)

One week after resurrection day, they were hiding out behind closed and locked doors. They are hiding out together afraid they might be wanted men because of their relationship to Jesus.

- Jesus gave them comfort

Jesus appeared to them with words of assurance, “Peace be unto you.” That was a common greeting, but it meant so much more now. They had peace with God because Jesus had died on the cross. Jesus showed them the scars in his hands and his side. His scars reminded them of His suffering. He still has the scars to remind us that He died for our sins on the cross.

- Jesus gave them a commission

Jesus gave them the same assignment He had received from the Father. He had mentioned this to the Father in prayer **John 17:18** *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* The disciples had an assignment to carry on Christ's work, not to begin a work of their own. They were sent out with His message and His ministry.

He gave them the Holy Spirit. This was a little foretaste of what would take place on the day of Pentecost. They had authority to speak for God. They did not have the authority to forgive sins. Only God can do that. They could declare that whoever received Jesus Christ was forgiven and whoever rejected Him was still in sin. There is no case in the New Testament of any apostle or person forgiving any man's sins.

3. The Lord changed Thomas from doubt to assurance (vs. 24-29)

- He was slow to believe that Jesus was alive

Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared to them on Resurrection Day. We don't know why Thomas wasn't there, but one thing's for sure. He missed a blessing. The great tragedy of life is not what people suffer, but what they miss.

Hebrews 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Thomas was not willing to accept their testimony. He wanted more proof. Thomas was not gullible. He believed in Jesus, but it was not a blind allegiance. When Jesus had spoken about heaven, Thomas wanted more information. **John 14:5** *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?* The Lord will help any person with honest doubts, but not the proud skeptic who refuses to believe regardless of the evidence. Charles Kingsley said, "There is no need to fear doubt as long as we have a disposition to believe."

- He was quick to confess Jesus as Lord

Eight days later Jesus appeared again, this time for Thomas' benefit. He invited Thomas to touch and see for himself, and then Thomas fell to his knees in worship, "My Lord and my God." This is the greatest confession a person can make. We remember him as "doubting Thomas," but we ought to call him "dogmatic Thomas." Thomas understood that if Jesus was really alive from the dead, it proved He was more than just a man. The resurrection proved that Jesus was who He claimed to be, the Son of God.

Romans 1:4 *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

Acts 2:36 *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* You and I don't make Jesus Lord. God the Father has already done that. We just acknowledge and worship Him as Lord.

Jesus spoke of other believers who have not seen Him in person, but yet they believe in Him.

1 Peter 1:8 *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*

4. The Lord changes believers from death to life (vs. 30-31)

This is the purpose of the Gospel of John. John selected eight signs or miracles from all the miracles Jesus did. The revelation of these signs causes a response of faith and that brings the result of life. Without Jesus there is only death.

- spiritual death (separation from God)

Ephesians 2:1 *And you hath he quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

- physical death (separation of the spirit from the body)

Hebrews 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

- eternal death (eternal separation from God)

Revelation 20:14 *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

But in Christ there is life.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

John 11:25-26 ²⁵ *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

Jesus brings us from death to life. In Him we have everlasting life, abundant life, and resurrection life.

The Lord changed grieving Mary into a witness. The Lord changed the fearful disciples into bold servants. The Lord changed doubting Thomas into a committed worshiper. The Lord changes all believers from death to life.

John 5:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

How has the Lord changed your life?