
Experience: Jesus and the Women

SCOTT HOEZEE

The Bible tells us that prior to his return to heaven in the ascension, Jesus was on earth for forty days after he was raised from the dead. Forty days. That is almost six weeks or a month-and-a-half; and you would think the gospels would have lots of stories about those special days, except they don't. We actually know very little about that time. Today on *Groundwork*, we begin a new series to look at the handful of incidents we do have in the Bible as to what Jesus said and did after Easter. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we are launching into a four-part series...not real long...but a four-part series; and as we just said, what we are going to be doing in this series is looking at the stories...and there are not a lot of them...of stuff that happened in those forty days between Easter and Ascension Day.

DARRELL DELANEY

If you look in scripture, you will realize that there are not very many accounts of what happened. There is not a whole lot of detail, but the good news is, I believe that the gospel writers by the power of the Holy Spirit gave us exactly what we need. So, we don't need to speculate, we don't need to guess, but just the facts. We only have the essentials, and that is enough for our faith.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we should say right at the outset of this series, Darrell, this isn't just idle curiosity or just sort of, you know, geeking around the Bible; this has deep meaning for us; and at the end of each episode, we are going to say: How does this minister to us? How does this speak to us even yet today? So, we want to make clear that what we are going to see in these few stories have a lot to do with our lives right now.

What do we have in the New Testament? We will start with that. One thing we have in all the gospels are some immediate things that happened right after Jesus was raised, on the day of the resurrection. After that, though, there isn't a whole lot. In Matthew, the only thing we get beyond the day of the resurrection is the very end, just the last couple verses when Jesus gives the great commission; that is all Matthew gives us after the Day of Resurrection.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, Mark doesn't actually give us anything at all. I mean, his gospel is the most brief, it is the earliest gospel account. So, he doesn't give us anything there, but Luke gives us the road to Emmaus, and even in Acts, we get Jesus' ascension. So, at least Luke gives us more than what Mark gives us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and we will be looking at the road to Emmaus story in our second program in this series. John is the one who gives us the most. We have two incidents on the evening of the first Sunday of Easter, and the Sunday after that. One with Thomas present...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And one with Thomas absent; the first one is when he is absent; but then, we get John 21, which we will also be looking at, where we get this story on the beach. So, John actually gives us several incidents. Mark gives us zero; Matthew only gives us the great commission; but John is the one that we will be going to also in this series. Why don't we have more, Darrell? I mean, you would think everything Jesus said and did as the resurrected Lord would be so important there would be chapters and chapters of what happened in those forty days, but it is not. Why not?

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, I believe, Scott, one of the reasons why not is because Jesus pretty much embodied the essence of the mission of God, so he did all the teaching, he did all the preaching, he did all the healing, he did everything that needed to be done, and taught us everything we need to know about the kingdom of God. So, he also helps us to learn what it means to be a disciple, and then he goes on and gets crucified and dies for us in our sins. I don't think there is much more to add there.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

The Bible calls Jesus the amen; I mean, that is the amen. He really proved everything. If you want to know what he did, you probably should just go back and look at it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and indeed, a lot of scholars have pointed out for a long time that among other things, the Father raising the Son to life on Easter was like the Father's giant stamp of approval on everything... Do you remember at the Transfiguration, Darrell, God spoke from the clouds: This is my beloved Son; and then... *listen...*

DARRELL DELANEY

Listen to him

SCOTT HOEZEE

Listen to him. And at the end of it, after the resurrection, God is saying the same thing: Listen to him. In fact, in Mark's gospel, the gospel ends in fearful silence, and that is weird, right? The women don't say anything to anyone because they are afraid. BOOM...end of the gospel. And then, the women are told: Go to Galilee...tell the disciples, go to Galilee. Well, where in Mark's gospel is Galilee? It's in Chapter 1, so some scholars think that that Galilee reference and the ending in silence is an invitation to the reader to go back and reread the whole gospel. Now that you have been to the cross, now that you understand the nature of the Messiah, reread it, because you didn't understand it the first time; reread it; it is all there before the crucifixion; and you know, you see that in John's gospel, too. How often doesn't John say: You know, when Jesus said that, we didn't get it...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But later, after he was raised, we did; and we are all invited to do that because Jesus said everything that needed saying before he died.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is kind of like that good book or that well-produced movie that puts details throughout the whole story. You know, it doesn't really gel for you until you see it in full, but then you have to go back and watch it again and say: Oh, these are the details that I missed. I think that is how the gospels are supposed to be read. You are supposed to read them; you are supposed to reread them; you are supposed to continue to look back and remember the things that Jesus taught, because the deeper it gets in you, the more you can actually review it. So, I don't like when people say: Yeah, I read it. I got it. I heard it. But if you reread it, there is more there. The scripture is inexhaustible.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; it is. Well, let's now dig into scripture, as we do here on *Groundwork*. Let's go, Darrell, to what Matthew tells us of the immediate aftermath in Chapter 28 of the day of the resurrection. Starting at verse 1: After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ²There 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. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid [of him] that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He is risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." ⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, you can see, Scott, in this passage that...you actually can see in all the passages...they don't all have the same account. It is kind of like when you see people who are at the scene of a car accident, there are different accounts, and it is not about who is lying, or whatever; they all have their own personal account of the incident that happened. So, each gospel has a different vantage point, and what I think is a really interesting thing to point out is the fact that these women are the first ones on the scene. They are the first responders; and in a male-dominated society, that actually speaks volumes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; they were the ones who stuck with Jesus at the cross after the disciples had all fled; and now, they are the first ones to go to the tomb the day after the Sabbath day rest, and the men are nowhere to be seen. So, we have Mary Magdalene and the *other* Mary. That is all Matthew says. We might get a little more detail from Luke that we will see in a little while in this program, but they are told an amazing thing: He is risen; and you know what, Darrell? What is interesting is that, of course, they are joyful, but you know, the world had never seen something like this before. *They* had never seen something like this before; and so, guess what? We are told three times the word *afraid*. They were joyful, but they were afraid. The angel says don't be afraid; and Jesus says don't be afraid; because when you come up on something so new, I think fear is kind of a natural reaction.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is totally understandable if you are standing in front of a celestial being...you've never seen that before...to have a fear response. But the good news is that God is there to comfort them; the angels are there to comfort them and actually bring them good news to let them know that they actually don't have to be afraid, but there is actually something they need to do. So, here is the other thing: they are told to go to Galilee. Galilee is the place that is very significant in this ministry, and you can tell them why, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, that is where it began, right? That is where Jesus began, in Galilee. Galilee, I think, becomes a symbol of humility...the humility of Jesus' ministry. It is not the big flashy scene in Jerusalem. Galilee is kind of the gateway to the rest of the world...

DARRELL DELANEY

Ground zero.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly right. The odd thing is that, of course, the resurrected Jesus and all the disciples and the women are in Jerusalem; right then and there; and the women see him there briefly; but Galilee is eighty miles north. Now, think about walking on foot, because that was all they could do. They couldn't hop on a taxi or a bus, right? Eighty mile walk to go see Jesus. There must be something significant about Galilee to make them hoof it all the way up there, and I think it is what we just said. It is a gateway to the rest of the world; it is a sign of the humble nature of Jesus' ministry; it is where it began; and now it is where it is beginning again. But we have a couple of other accounts of things that happened on that Easter day, and so in just a moment we will take a look at what Luke and John have to tell us. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, let's dig right back into scripture, and tell us what Luke has to tell us about that Easter morning from Luke 24.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says: ¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of the sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" ⁸Then they remembered his words. ⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, there is Luke's account of that amazing morning; very similar to Matthew. At first, it doesn't look like Luke is going to give us any more idea of who the women were, but he does eventually, and names three of them: Mary Magdalene again, Mary the mother of James, and then a woman named Joanna...I don't think we know anything much about Joanna, but her name is in here; but then, there were other women, too. So, we don't know if there were five women or seven or ten, but for sure, Luke tells us...and remember, Luke was the meticulous researcher...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

There were more than three; and he gives us not the one angel we saw in Matthew, but two angels.

DARRELL DELANEY

So again, scripture shows how these faithful women were the first responders on the scene to talk about...actually, they experienced what happened, and then when they go back to the apostles, the apostles don't believe them, even though they are actually obeying the message of the angels to go back and share the good news.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, what you would love to read is: Then the disciples fell on their knees and they praised God and they sang for joy at the resurrection of their Lord; except, no. Instead, they respond by rolling their eyes, they think it is just a crazy story; in fact, there is a word here in Greek called *l?ros*, which is only used in the whole Bible here, and it means *nonsense*. It just sounded goofy to them. It sounded to them as if, you know, somebody came up to you on the street and said: Your female uncle understands the ways of the spotted jabberwocky in Tasmania, dude! You would say: Okay, this person is a little left of center and walk away quietly because that is nonsense. That makes no sense at all. First ever sermon on the gospel, Darrell...nonsense, the disciples said.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know it is interesting because the historical account of witnesses as far as Jewish history goes, they needed two or three witnesses...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But most of the time, those were male witnesses. So, for women to have a witness, they didn't expect them to have an accurate testimony because, again, in their male-dominated society, where they don't believe this, that women could actually have an accurate account of something. So, they didn't pay attention to them; and then, I think another thing that really stuck out in the verse to me is that this whole part where the angel says: Remember what he told you?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Remember, Jesus already told you this was going to happen. Remember it...so, he is trying to jog their memory. Remembering is a wonderful and powerful tool that God has been using all throughout scripture to help us reflect on what he has done and who his character is. I think that we would be empowered in our faith each and every day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; that is what we said at the end of the first segment of this program, Darrell, and you were saying it. We are called, not just to read the Bible, but reread it, and reread it and reread it, and you are going to keep making new discoveries by the Holy Spirit when you do.

Now let's look at one final story in this segment. This is from John 20, and we are going to start at verse 11: Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "And I don't know they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). ¹⁷Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them the things he had said to her.

DARRELL DELANEY

This message is powerful for many reasons. I really like how the fact that he called her name, and that is when she recognized him. Again, Jesus is under the radar. She thinks he is the gardener. She thinks that he is just some unassuming character, which speaks to the humility of our Lord in this situation...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But then, he wants her to not cling on to him. That is a very curious passage: Don't hold on to me.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is right: Don't hold onto me because I have not ascended yet. It is like, yes, but she is not going to be able to hold onto you after you ascend, either; but I think, Darrell, probably this is more metaphorical; in other words, you cannot tie me down to earth; you cannot keep me here; you cannot freeze me here; I am going to have to leave. It is kind of a paradox, right, for him to do the work in the Church that needs doing, he has to leave and let the Holy Spirit empower us to do what needs happening [sic]. So, I think that “don't hold on to me” means you cannot keep me here, Mary; but Darrell, he also has some interesting language that he uses here about where he is going and to whom he is going.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this is the first time that Jesus actually goes into saying this is our Father; your Father and my Father—that is where I am going; I am going to see your Father and my Father—our Father. Most of the time in the New Testament when Jesus is talking he always says: my Father...my Father; but because of the resurrection, because we now have divine access to the Father—to the throne—he is opening the way, saying: This is our Father; and that is a very encouraging passage for us to remember that now we have access to him; and we see in these stories that these things are happening after Jesus is raised, but we haven't really talked about what they mean for us; and so, as we go into this final segment, I would like us to turn towards the practical application of this; so, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this first episode in a four-part series looking at what the gospels tell us Jesus did between Easter morning and his ascension day forty-days later; and Darrell, we want to make a few observations to see how this connects to our lives today. We have looked at the stories from Matthew, Luke and John. They do have something to do with our lives right now today, and that is one of the things we want to talk about.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is first important to note that there is something common to all four accounts. It is really the fact that no one saw Jesus physically walk out of the tomb.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

What is interesting to me is that the gospels don't give you what they don't have. They are not making up these things, they are not trying to sensationalize the message. They are going exactly with a just-the-facts kind of approach. We see this is what happened; we got there and he wasn't there; we wrote down what we had, and wanted to make sure that everyone knew this is the most accurate account that we could give.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, one of the things that lends itself to the authentic reading of the gospels is that they didn't jazz up the gospel. I mean, you know, if you really wanted to convince people, you would say what? I know Frank, and he was standing there that morning, and he saw Jesus walk right out of the tomb. No; nobody saw Jesus walk out of the tomb, and so they don't pretend otherwise. They are being honest, and I think that is an important thing to think about. Another thing, though Darrell, that I think applies to our lives yet today is the fact that the resurrection accounts, when you really kind of think about them...they are rather on the lowkey side of things.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, when we think about Easter Sunday, as opposed to Good Friday and Ash Wednesday, there is so much celebration...there is so much jubilation...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

There is big music, there is bring out the choir, everybody is loud. It is wonderful, right? Exciting; but then, when you look in scripture, you don't see all of the pomp, you don't see all of that celebration. Maybe one time you saw it, and that was during the Palm Sunday appearance; but other than that, the resurrection...a lot of people might have missed it, that is how lowkey it was.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The irony...and we have talked about this before on *Groundwork*, Darrell...but the irony is that a lot of our Easter worship services are more jazzed up than the Bible itself. You know, we hire extra brass and the organ is at full throttle. We put the *Hallelujah Chorus* at the end like the exclamation point on the whole thing; but that is more energy than Matthew, Mark, Luke and John combined. Jesus...it seems like he is always quietly walking up from behind.

DARRELL DELANEY

Even Jesus' resurrection was done in a very humble way. I mean, it is not his time period, but just think about our time period. He didn't rent out a TV spot or have a special commercial to announce it. He didn't put it all over the Internet. Even during his time, he didn't make sure that Herod and Caesar knew. He did what he did, and some people...like I said, it went under the radar...and some people missed it; but he actually came in in a lowkey way. He is the one who is the unassuming gardener. He is very intimately connected to the people, but most people would miss it because it is humble.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and here is what I have taken away, Darrell, when I have preached on these texts, and I think maybe...I am sure we have mentioned at some point in the history of *Groundwork* before, too, but it bears repeating...I think that that feature to how the gospels describe the resurrection is hopeful to me because it fits my ordinary days, right? How many days do you have, Darrell, where the trumpets are blaring, the *Hallelujah Chorus* is sounding, and bright lights are shining on you, you know. We don't live in the kind of jubilation and glory we crank up on Easter morning in church. Most of our days are kind of ordinary.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Most of our days are kind of quiet and humble; but if Jesus, as the resurrected Lord in the gospels is that humble, then we are assured he is still with us now, too; even on our quiet days or even on our low days. I mean, he comes up behind Mary Magdalene when she is weeping her eyes out...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We all have days when we are crying. The gospel says that is when Jesus is with you.

DARRELL DELANEY

We serve a God who is with us on the mountain high experiences...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the valley low experiences; and in the ordinary, mundane, and regular things, this God is with us right there; and that is very encouraging to me that my life is pretty ordinary. Just like you, I don't see any trumpets or I don't hear any music. I don't have a theme song going on behind me. What I do have is a God who understands in the repetitive parts of life, in the rat race, in the temptations, he knows what that is like because he has been there with me. He has been there with you as well, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is the promise. You know, we started this program digging into Matthew 28 and his account there of Easter, but Matthew has a theme, and the theme of Matthew is Immanuel—God with us. We get it in Chapter 1 when the angel appears to Joseph in a dream: ²⁰But after he (Joseph) had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said to the prophet: ²³“The virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

That is Chapter 1.

DARRELL DELANEY

And then he book-ends it at the end of Matthew Chapter 28, when he gives the great commission to the disciples. He says: ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always (there it is) to the very end of the age.

SCOTT HOEZEE

With you—Immanuel with you, with us—the with-us God; that is what Matthew presents to us; and as we just said, Darrell, compared to what you might expect to read about the resurrection, in those simple stories we read here today on *Groundwork*, those very first encounters of the resurrected Jesus, we are reminded that Jesus is Immanuel. In circumstances that are glad and sad, on days when we feel hopeful and on days when we feel a little lost, on days when there are trumpets blaring, we do have good days, but on the days when that seems like a distant memory, that is the good news of the gospel: God is with us; the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is with us always. That is the gospel...that is good news...thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we study what happens when Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24.

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or to tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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Printed on March 13, 2025