

**John**  
**Easter, John 20-12**

**Dan Hamel**  
**March 31, 2024**

Happy Easter! We are so excited to have you here with us today. I know we have a lot of guests, so I'd love to take the chance to introduce myself. My name is Dan Hamel. My wife Keren and I have been at this church for seven years. We love being at a church that is 100% committed to connecting people to Jesus.

As a church, over the last four months we've been studying the gospel of John together, learning more about the life, ministry, wisdom, and power of Jesus. As a visual overview, we have these seven paintings on stage, each of which represents one of the climactic statements Jesus makes about his identity. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life"—he is the one who sustains us. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world"—he is the one who guides us. Jesus said, "I am the door"—he is the one who protects us. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd"—he knows us and cares for us. Jesus said, "I am the true vine"—he is the ultimate source of vitality and strength. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life"—he is the only path to heaven and to all true knowledge of God.

Finally—and this is so perfect for Easter weekend—Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." There is light bursting forth from the tomb. Speaking of light, most of you know this already, but the experts are predicting that next week, the world is going to descend on our little strip of Indiana because of the solar eclipse. We are in the path of totality. The last time we had a total eclipse in this area was September 14...of 1205. Apparently it is going to get really, really dark, and people are going to come from everywhere to see it. The Bible tells us that when Jesus was hanging the cross, darkness came over not just a small stretch of the earth, but over all the world. That unexpected cosmological sign is recorded by secular historians from the first century. They said the sky went dark and they had no idea why. But more than the physical darkness that covered the land, there was an even greater sense in the spiritual realms that darkness had won, the light of the world was slain. Everyone assumed that all hope had been lost. Easter morning is the greatest turning point in the history of the world. Jesus not only said, "I am the resurrection and the life," he conquered the grave, and he imparts that victory to everyone who places their faith in him.

We are going to unpack the events of Easter and see the story told to us in three different scenes from the gospel of John.

### *Scene One*

We know that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and laid in a tomb. His body was covered with spices and wrapped in burial clothes. He was placed in a tomb with a large stone rolled over it and a seal placed on it. Jesus' friends wept and wept because the man they loved, the person they followed, the one they hoped would bring the kingdom of God, was gone. They had all left family and friends and homes and careers to follow him, and now he was dead, and their dreams of a better day were buried with him. Just like we go to grieve at a cemetery, one of his followers, a woman named Mary, went to the tomb to grieve. But when she got there, she found the stone rolled away. She immediately went to tell the other disciples. Peter and John were there, and both ran as fast as they could to the tomb. This is where the Bible is funny, and so much like real life. John, the one writing this account, says that he outran Peter and reached the tomb first. Like a typical guy, he made sure to mention that in the story so that for all of history, the billions of people who read this gospel would know that he was faster than his friend! Eventually the slow poke got there. "Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb" (John 20:6). What did they see when they walked in? "He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen" (John 20:6-7). The body was not there. Jesus had risen from the dead.

## *Scene Two*

There are several vignettes we are given as Jesus, who is no longer in the tomb, reveals himself to his disciples, three different times in three different ways. First, Jesus reveals himself to Mary outside the tomb. After Peter and John run back to their house, Mary stays there and is weeping, crying, eyes are red, face is puffy; she has just lost the person she cares most about in this world. Then Jesus shows up next to her, but she doesn't recognize him right away. "Jesus asked her: 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'" (John 20:15). She was so filled with grief and so not expecting it to be Jesus that she didn't even recognize him. She just assumed it was a gardener, the caretaker for the cemetery. Her default assumption was that someone robbed Jesus' grave, when in reality, it was Jesus who robbed the grave. Then Jesus said a single word: he called her name—"Jesus said to her, 'Mary'" (John 20:16). As soon as she heard Jesus call her name, she cried out, "Teacher!" and grabbed hold of him and then quickly went to tell the others.

The other gospels tell us that when the disciples heard Mary's testimony about Jesus having risen from the dead and appearing to her, they thought she had lost her mind. Luke's gospel tells us that they did not believe her and thought everything sounded like nonsense. But then that evening, Jesus appeared to them, too. All of them except a man named Thomas were in the same room. They kept the doors locked because they assumed that the same people who killed Jesus were looking for them and wanted to put them on a cross, just like they did to their leader. And then suddenly, Jesus was standing in the room with them. They couldn't believe their eyes. "Jesus showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). They believed. Later Thomas, the one who wasn't with them, showed up. They all told him, "It's true. Mary was right—Jesus is alive, he's risen from the dead. We saw him." Thomas told them the same thing they all told Mary: grief has made you crazy; you've lost your minds. He said, "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" (John 20:25) This is why he was called Doubting Thomas. But then a week later, the disciples were all together again. This time Thomas was with them, and Jesus appeared again. He went right up to Thomas and said, "You said you wouldn't believe unless you saw it with your own eyes. Here I am. See my hands? Put your finger in the nail hole. See my side? Reach out your hand and touch the place the spear went in. Stop doubting and believe." And he did. "Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:28). Three different groups, three different appearances.

## *Scene Three*

An important part of the story leading up to the cross is that Peter was the one who denied Jesus. Not once, not twice, but three times. Peter is the one who, when Jesus was being accused and beaten and left all alone, left him there and swore he didn't know him. We can only imagine how much guilt, how much disappointment, how much regret and shame Peter felt for what he had done. But instead of the gospel story closing without any resolution to that story, in the final page this biography about Jesus, we read about a time after the resurrection when Peter and a few other disciples were on a lake in a boat fishing. They were fishermen before following Jesus. Now that Jesus was no longer around, they went back to what they knew. They weren't catching a thing. They saw someone on the shore who told them to cast their nets to the other side, so they did. As soon as they did, they caught so many fish they literally couldn't even pull the nets in. It was at that moment John realized that wasn't just a good fishing tip; that was Jesus on the shoreline. "As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment around him and jumped into the water" (John 21:7). Eventually, all the other guys, with the boat and nets, made it to shore, where they roasted fish on a charcoal fire. There, next to that fire, just like the fire where Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus looked Peter in the eyes and asked him, "Do you love me?" Peter said, "Yes, you know I love you". Jesus asked him again. "Of course! You know I love you."

Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” Peter was a little exasperated. He said, ““Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you” (John 21:17). Jesus wasn’t trying to belabor the point. He wasn’t insecure, fishing for compliments and approval. He was offering Peter an incredible gift. Peter denied him three times next to a fire. Three times he swore he didn’t even know that man. Jesus graciously gave Peter the chance to declare his love for him just as many times as he had denied him.

That’s the Easter story, told by John in three different scenes. I want to give each of those scenes a one-word summary and talk about what it means for us today. The first word is **rescue**. The Bible tells us that all of us have fallen short of God’s expectations, that we have sinned, and that we are facing the temporal and eternal consequences for those sins. But when Jesus rose from the dead, it was the promise that he has rescued us from sin and the punishment we deserved. “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). We were doomed, but Jesus loved us enough to rescue us. Decades ago in New York City, a woman named Kitty Genovese was walking home from work to her apartment when she was mugged. She cried out for help and several apartment lights quickly turned on. Later investigations would show that dozens of people saw the assault, but, presumably out of self-preservation, no one went to her aid to help (see photo below). And so her attacker, who initially fled when the lights turned on, returned, continued to attack her, and ultimately took her life. Everyone saw that there was trouble; no one wanted to put themselves at risk to help her. Psychologists actually use this as an example in college textbooks about human tendency to look away for self-preservation. That is the exact opposite of what Jesus does. He sees our condition and knows the trouble we are in. He knows that our lives are filled with grief and pain, with turmoil and difficulty, as well as with the eternal consequences that come from sin and self-centeredness. But he doesn’t simply turn on the lights to look; he doesn’t stay in a place of safety. He comes down from heaven, he comes near, and on the cross he fights the battle we couldn’t win. He locks horns with the enemy we were helpless against, and the resurrection is the proof that he was victorious, that he has won!

Because we live in 21st century America, most of us don’t know what it’s like to have a real enemy. The greatest enemy I’m fighting right now is the birds around my house. I drive a black truck. I came outside the other day, and my black truck was covered, absolutely covered, in white and brown bird droppings. When I say covered, I had to take it through the car wash four times in a row. The staff said they had never seen anything like it before. After I got the exterior clean, I was feeling better about the situation. But later I was driving the kids home, and it was such a nice day I opened a window for them. When I parked, I forgot to close the window. All I can assume is that one of my neighbors has been putting laxatives in the birdfeeder, because birds literally got into my truck and defiled it. Right now, I feel like those birds are a real enemy. But it’s just my truck. We have real enemies that are waging a war against our souls: selfishness, sin, Satan, and death. Jesus went to the cross to fight that battle for us. The empty tomb means that he has won the victory, and he has extended that victory to us. The first word is rescue.

The second word is **revelation**. Jesus didn’t just rise from the dead and ascend straight to heaven; he revealed himself again and again. John showed us Jesus’ revelation to Mary in the garden, to the disciples behind locked doors, to Thomas, inviting him to touch his body and feel his wounds for himself. But if you look at the accounts from the entire New Testament, you’ll see that over the course of several weeks, Jesus revealed himself on more than a dozen occasions to over 500 people. The Bible tells us that after forty days, Jesus was raised up to heaven, where he is restored to his Father and he is preparing heaven for us. Now he is not appearing to people in bodily form as he did right after his resurrection, but he is still revealing himself to people, communicating God’s love to us, helping us to know that God is real, that God loves us, that he wants a relationship with us. If our eyes are open, I believe we’ll see Jesus revealing himself to us constantly throughout our lives.

When I was in middle school my parents sat our family down and told us they were splitting up. This was the third time my dad left the house. I was heartbroken. When I was a bit younger, I wasn't really able to process it. Now that I was a bit older, I could understand it more, I could feel it more deeply. I was so sad. But it was during that exact window of time I felt Jesus reveal his love for me, his sovereign protection over my life. That's when faith became real for me. I remember what it was like a few years ago when my first son was born. I was in the hospital, holding my child, contemplating the miracle of life, and the depth of love I felt for this boy I had just met. Again I could feel God revealing himself to me. Last year my mom unexpectedly passed away. We flew out to Colorado for the funeral. My siblings all agreed it would have been mom's preference for me to preach her funeral. It was the hardest message I've ever had to deliver, but it was nothing compared to how hard it was to stand next to her grave and watch them lower my mom's casket into the ground. It was a visual that will never leave my mind. But in that moment, one of the most painful of my life, I could feel Jesus' presence. The Bible says that God is near to the broken-hearted, that he saves those who are crushed in spirit, and that he hides us in the shadow of his wings. When I needed it the most, I could feel him there. I believe the same is true for you. God wants to reveal himself. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." In all of our lives, in every season, good and bad, God is knocking at the door, wanting to make himself known. We get to decide how we are going to respond to his revelation.

If we open the door, that will lead to our final word: **restoration**. Of all the appearances Jesus made, the longest interaction, the most continuous dialogue centers around that time Jesus saw the disciples fishing on the lake, when Peter jumped into the water and swam to him. The Bible says that he and Jesus stood around a charcoal fire, and I believe in that light of that fire, Peter was able to see Jesus as never before, and in the light of that fire, all the pieces of the puzzle, three entire years of his ministry came together in an aha moment! You see, it was when Peter was standing next to a charcoal fire that he denied Jesus three times, and here is Jesus, meeting Peter at a charcoal fire, the place of Peter's greatest failure, and Jesus comes to offer him not condemnation, but grace. As Jesus asked three times, "Do you love me?" and Peter responded three times, "I love you, I love you, I love you," everything came into perspective. The bread of life, the light of the world, the true vine, the way, the truth and the life, the good shepherd, the door for the sheep, the resurrection and the life—this is God, in the flesh. Even when we make a mess of things, he meets us where we are and allows us to search our hearts and say with conviction, "I love you." What a beautiful picture of Jesus.

So many of us view God as a judge watching us vigilantly, almost waiting for us to make a mistake, and then quickly dropping the gavel and declaring us guilty. What we see in John's picture of Jesus is the opposite. Yes, Jesus knows our every weakness. He is aware of the details of our greatest mistakes and the moments of deepest regret and shame. But his heart is not to condemn but to restore! There are a lot of home improvement shows where a crew goes to a house that has been abandoned and dilapidated, and they look at a property that many people would say should be abandoned and condemned. But instead of buying it and bulldozing it, they buy it and restore it. They return it to its original splendor and make it not just good as new, but better than new. That's what Jesus does with us! He is aware of all our issues. Our pain. Our failures. Our sin. Our betrayals. But he doesn't ask us if we will try harder. He doesn't ask us to give it any more effort. He asks us one question: "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" It's that moment that we say yes, in trust and devotion, that all the pieces come together.

That's what Easter is all about: Jesus, raised from the dead, Jesus redeeming us, Jesus revealing himself to us, Jesus asking us if we love him so he can restore us!

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Namara did not elaborate.  
The Secretary stressed that the war would have to be won in South Vietnam.

He also drew attention to the

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nepotism and other forms of favoritism in selecting candidates for on-the-job training.

Civil rights groups have maintained that many construc-

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in the evaluation of the properties' worth, conflicting appraisals have been a major issue in the trial.

Roy M. Cohn, general coun-

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ding, is expected to be the forerunner of similar findings by appeals courts throughout the country.

The principal beneficiaries in

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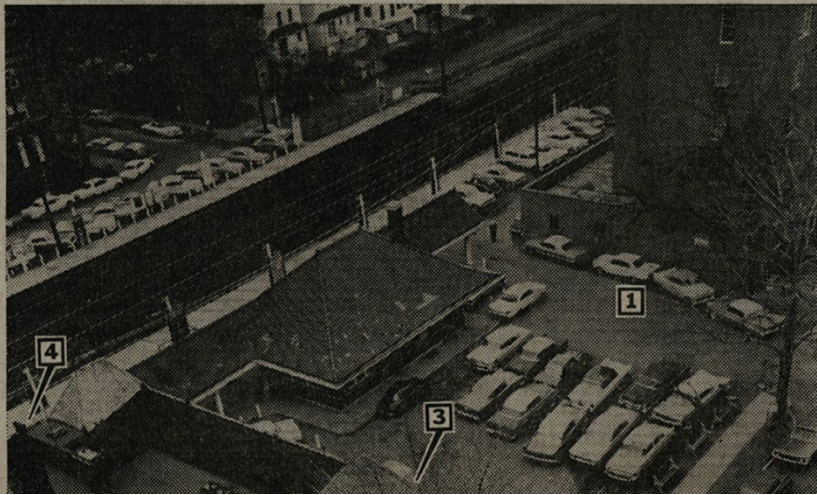
# 37 Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police

## Apathy at Stabbing of Queens Woman Shocks Inspector

By MARTIN GANSBERG

For more than half an hour 38 respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks in Kew Gardens.

Twice the sound of their voices and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted him and frightened him off. Each time he returned, sought her out and stabbed her again. Not one person telephoned the police during the assault; one witness called after the woman



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