

# The Wind of God And Resurrection

by Todd Atkinson

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*This sermon delves into the profound significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the intertwining of sorrow and hope, the need to recognize Jesus in the midst of sorrow, and the importance of entering into the resurrection experience with humility and openness. It highlights the danger of imposing personal expectations on the resurrection and encourages a genuine, scriptural approach to encountering the risen Christ in everyday life.*

**Scripture:** John 20:1, Luke 24:13, Acts 9:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Romans 6:4, 1 Corinthians 15:20

**Topics:** "Resurrection", "Hope in Sorrow"

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## Description

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## Transcript

on those two things. During V-Days I drew attention to this Celtic cross that was made many years ago for me, for my consecration. And there's a reason why I've had an affinity for this particular kind of cross.

It's called a Celtic cross. So it comes from the Celtic era, 5th 6th century of the United Kingdom. And of course, the cross section has always represented the cross, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But to the Celtic people, the circle, amongst other things, was a symbol of eternity. So they borrowed that from their culture and used it as a symbol of the resurrection. And so then in one image they brought together the cross and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so I've always appreciated that because that, to me, represented what we might think of as a full gospel. Why does that seem fulsome to me? Because at our baptism, we make an oath, a promise, a covenant. Romans 6 defines or describes in some detail that covenant.

But the covenant is that we will share in Jesus' death and that we will share in Jesus' life. Both of them. And so through my Christian life I've just had to live in that kind of tension in the middle knowing two things are true of the Christian life.

There is cross times and there is resurrection times. And I shouldn't be surprised that there is both. When people say, well I didn't sign up for this, the answer is yes you did.

It's called Christian baptism. Read Colossians 2. Read Romans 6. We did sign up for this. That we would participate in the cross and we would participate in the resurrection.

But it's one thing to understand that as a hypothesis. I believe that Jesus died. I believe that He rose again.

I believe that His death has implications for me. I believe that His resurrection has implications for me. It's one thing to have some kind of theological concept of that.

But it's another thing to know how to enter it, how to share it, how to participate in the resurrection. How do you do that? And how do you do it without over-idealizing the resurrection? Without placing a lot of our own unrealistic expectations on the resurrection? So you hear someone preaching about the resurrection and new life. Hope builds inside of us and we think that's fantastic.

When I have a resurrection experience or when I share in the resurrection, life will be very rosy from then on. Or something is going to strike me in a moment. It will happen in an instant and life will never feel the same again.

And so if we're not careful it's an over-idealization. It's kind of imposing our ideas on the resurrection. And the reason why it's kind of a dangerous thing to do is even the very original apostles, the original disciples, the early church, who were eyewitnesses of the resurrection, did not enter into the resurrection like that.

That's not what it looked like for them at all. And that's why I say it's an over-idealization. So I've been working through the passages in a roughly chronological order.

I'm amazed with how the resurrection has happened and there's people still struggling to believe it. It didn't just change their life in a moment. I think if I was to choose a metaphor, it would be more like the sun rising over a prairie horizon.

How I love that. I've lived in several very small places on the prairies, on the edge of town, in Rob's beloved Saskatchewan. And those mornings where it goes from complete blackness to just a tiny glow, which becomes a thin sliver, and then gradually, very gradually, this sun rises on you, unstopably, until it just fills the air.

That's how the earliest disciples entered into the resurrection. And I think maybe it is a more realistic and accessible picture of how we might enter into the resurrection also. Let's take a look at the very first passage.

John chapter 20. And I'd like you to think of your own life as you do this. When I taught this to Viadays, we did it in a kind of reflective way.

One ear on me, one ear on God, listening, making notes, asking questions, engaging with the text, not just passively listening to it, letting it get down there, letting it get deep. And over those days, as we just poured over the resurrection passages, identified, saw ourselves in them as like in a mirror, Jesus began coming to us in very parallel ways to what we were reading. And we've been touched by His risenness.

The passage we looked at this evening begins talking about Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb early in the morning. According to loose gospel, she went there bringing spices that were used in the burial process. When she gets to the tomb, however, she immediately saw that the large stone that was used to lock the tomb has been completely moved out of the way.

She sees it, and she is deeply distressed by this. I mean, this is Mary Magdalene, the one who had been tormented by seven evil spirits until Jesus set her free. And at that moment, He won her heart forever.

She was a devoted follower at His side with the disciples, and now He's died. When He died, it felt like something in her died also. And now the only way that she feels like she can care for Him is at least to care for His body.

His body was the only point of connection she still had with Him. And now even that is gone. In some way she's feeling the accumulative effect of days.

I wonder if she's not thinking, I mean, these type of language comes up later in the passage, like, wow, this has been, these guys have been so cruel. There's just been injustice after injustice. There has been mockery.

There has been violence. I mean, they killed Him. Can't they leave us alone now? When is it going to stop? When do we get a break? Now they have to take His body, the one piece of connection.

We can't even have a proper funeral. And so the accumulative effect of these days has deeply distressed her. And baby, you felt like that a little bit in life.

Not another thing. Not again. Now what's going to happen? And in her distress, she runs to tell Peter and John, and she tells them they have taken the Lord.

They've taken Him out of the tomb. We don't know where they've laid Him. And she's convinced that there's only one explanation for the empty tomb.

That Jesus' enemies have struck and they've stolen the body. That's the only way she thinks you could possibly interpret these facts. And this is a key resurrection theme.

If you're writing things down, write this one down. When people have gone through sorrow and loss, it affects how they interpret things. Mary could have seen the empty tomb and thought, this could mean something amazing.

But instead, she looked at it and thought, this must mean something bad. You see, there's been some really rough days. There's been lots of bad things.

Now she is anticipating it. It's actually not bad that the tomb is empty, but she's interpreting it like that. She's stuck in that now.

And I found that has happened in life with me. After lots of tough things, I begin to wince. I begin to expect things.

And sometimes even really great things. I think, well, what happens if it turns bad? Mary is in that place. There's an empty tomb.

It could only mean something bad. It must mean enemies at work. And in actuality, it was heaven at work.

And she couldn't yet see it. It raises all kinds of questions. In what way is heaven already at work on your behalf, in the most fantastic, life-changing ways, and you cannot yet see it? In what way are you locked into the sorrow of the last season, when the joy of a new season is right there offering itself to you? At the news of this, Peter and John are equally alarmed.

And so they run to the tomb. I love the story, because they're running. And then it says, the disciple who Jesus loved outran Peter.

But of course, it's John. That's John. He's the disciple who's loved.

It's also John's gospel. So this is John writing about himself. Just want you to know, as we are running to the tomb, I outran him.

I just love it. If you're going to write your gospel, you know, just write yourself into it in a really great way. Now, I love the fact that he doesn't even say his name.

It's just the disciple that, you know, that Jesus loved. I won't say who that is, but it's really me, because I probably loved him more. So whatever's going on there, it seems like such a funny fact to throw in.

We're both running, but I was running faster. You know, Peter and John are often mentioned together in Scripture, but there's a slight difference in their approaches to things. John tends to be the first one to perceive.

Peter tends to be the first one to act. And the same thing happens in this story. So when they arrive at the empty tomb, John bends his head slightly to look inside the tomb.

Peter arrives just a bit later, and they just go straight on in. That's Peter for you. But when he gets inside the tomb, what he saw is not what he had expected to see.

So again, pause there for a minute. Every day, what do you expect to see? What do you expect your day is going to be like? What do you expect to see of Jesus in that day? Because we live with expectations, whether we've teased them out or not, whether we've identified them or not. They may be low expectations.

They're still expectations. And the resurrection begins to elevate those expectations. It begins to change, morph, revise those expectations.

They came here expecting a worst-case scenario. Jesus' body had been stolen. But when they look in the tomb, it's not what they thought.

If thieves had stolen Jesus' body, then what should the tomb ought to have looked like? It should have looked ransacked. Disheveled. There should have been signs of people moving in haste.

The site would have been treated disrespectfully. And to their surprise, and that's what the resurrection does, it begins to reintroduce pleasant surprise. To their surprise, it didn't look like that at all.

The linen cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus' body were still lying there neatly. Who would steal a body and leave the covering? Who would want to touch the dead body? The cloth that was used to

shroud Jesus' head was separate from the other linens, and the Scripture says it was folded up in a place by itself neatly. Everything was so orderly.

Someone had been treating these items with care and respect and conscientiousness. Peter sees this and has no explanation for this. But he must have made some kind of an audible gasp or a noise because it drew John running in.

John comes in, looks at this. He's the perceiver. When he comes in and looks at the linen cloths lying by themselves neatly, a face cloth folded by itself, he too must have thought, this is not what I expected.

How do we make sense of this? And it was at that moment, something happens in his memory. Something happens to John on the inside. He suddenly remembers Jesus talking about not just dying, but about rising.

It comes back to his mind. At the time Jesus said these things, he didn't understand what Jesus meant by rising. The Scripture said he didn't understand the Scriptures.

So we're not actually sure how he heard this, what he did understand by it, but he didn't understand it properly. And I think too we have heard about the resurrection, but we have misconceptions about it. We have improper understandings about the resurrection and about how we relate to it.

So here's, we're in good company. This is John the Beloved. This is the apostle closest to Jesus who's like, I don't really get what he was talking about when he talked about rising.

Maybe he thought it was metaphorical, like in the great resurrection you'll rise. Maybe he thought your memory or legacy will live on, but in this moment it strikes John, oh that's what he meant. He meant he would literally rise on the third day.

Oh wow, that changes everything. The Bible says he saw and he believed. He believed.

Hadn't even seen Jesus yet. What did he believe? Well he believed the Scriptures. He believed everything Jesus said.

It comes back, he remembered all the times Jesus said, I will rise again. I will rise again. And he said, and after I rise I will come to you.

I will not leave you as orphans. They felt so alone and orphaned. So hope begins to be reintroduced back to his heart on one basis and one basis alone.

He begins to believe the Scriptures. When it says he believed, now of course there's this linen folded face cloth, but that's not what he's believing in. It's just like a signpost.

It's a little something Jesus left behind to remind him of the Scriptures, to point them. He believed in the Scriptures, John 10 says, but there's these little signposts that Jesus was leaving behind to point him in that direction. So over the last number of weeks meditating on this passage, it has opened my eyes.

I'm looking for the folded linen face cloths. How do you enter the resurrection? How do you take Jesus and his word? How does the resurrection become a reality in your life? How do you share in the resurrection? Romans 6, how do you participate in the resurrection? Go run and see an empty tomb. Understand he's not speaking metaphorically.

All his promises are literal, they're real. But he will begin, for the person that wants to see him in his risenness, he will begin to lead folded linen napkins in your life if you have the eyes to see them. And our faith isn't in linen napkins.

They're just little signposts. They're little drops of grace to get you looking at him and his holy Scriptures, but he will leave little signs, little signs of life. Are you looking for the folded face cloths? Have you sensed them in people that you've met with over the last number of days? When you hear a testimony, you're like, whoa, wow, God did that? That's a sign of the resurrection right there.

Hasn't happened to me yet. Because remember, it's just Peter and John right now. It's not happening to the whole apostolic company.

They did not all enter in in the exact same way or at the exact same time. And so it took a community, it took a trust to watch them begin to enter in in different ways and times to hear Sheremie's word tonight. In addition to its amazing content, she's not been through a very easy season at all.

And now she's up there glowing, receiving visions in worship. I would say that's a pretty good folded napkin. And if you want to exercise the humility, just go around asking people, what's Jesus doing in your life? What's Jesus doing in your life? And you will begin to hear stories of, you'll see signs of the resurrection everywhere, increasing, multiplying.

So be careful about denying it to other disciples. Don't worry, it's going to happen. People are going to do this.

They did it amongst the original disciples. Like, well, it hasn't happened to me yet. I haven't, I don't know, some women said that they went to the tomb of angels.

I don't know. These are perfectly reliable people, credible people. But it's like, I haven't seen it yet.

I'm not believing it. So if that happens, no big deal. It happened then, it's going to happen now.

But, but these things aren't written for our instruction. So hopefully we don't have to repeat that all the time. Go ask people.

And in your life, ask Jesus, I want you to come to me in your risenness. I want to share in your risenness. Bring me into it.

Bring me into a whole, holy, and healthy, and holistic view of your risenness. And begin by leaving some folded linen napkins. Little signs that times are changing.

That's quite a moment for Peter and John. They haven't seen him yet, but they definitely think, oh, he's alive. And if that's the case, how do you understand verse 10? It says, then the disciples went back to their homes.

I think if I'd run to the tomb in great sorrow, thinking Jesus is dead, and now they've even stolen the body. If I had come to the realization, he's alive. I don't know what I would do at that moment, but it doesn't strike me as, well, what are you going to do? I think I'll just go home, put my feet up.

And so this would not leave me for days. They just, they just went to their homes. It sounds kind of anticlimactic.

I don't think it's anticlimactic at all. Read back into the early chapters of Luke. Guess where most of the disciples met Jesus? In their homes.

That's where he first came to them, was in their homes. So many of his best miracles, his most wonderful experiences happen in people's homes. And his promises are flooding back to them.

I will not leave you. I will rise again. I will come again for you.

I will not leave you as orphans. So I, what are we supposed to do, I guess? Because they knew he would come for them. This wasn't checking out.

This was trust. He came to us in the beginning in our homes. I'm going to go back to my home in expectation.

So let me just speak to you a couple minutes about the profundity of this. The day in which we live, I don't know if we all realize it, but our culture, Canadian culture, North American culture, is riddled with thoughts of escapism. You can see it on social media everywhere.

The kind of thought that life would be so much better if I was just doing something else. Life is better somewhere else. If I could go on a trip, if I could go on an adventure, life is just somehow better elsewhere.

It's mundane where it is, and it's awesome. Somehow it's just out there is where real life is. If I could just get out of this life and get into a different kind of life, I've seen it in myself.

I never called it that, but I realized, I thought it was just me being a visionary, that somehow the present was never good enough. And then all the goodness of God and the promises of God, I always projected them in the future. So every time I'm pushing toward the future all the time, and I'm missing the present, the now-ness.

I have a spiritual director who I speak with every couple of weeks, and he'll often catch this. He said, Todd, the moment that God, the most powerful moment in your life, the moment that God most wants to act is now. It's this moment.

You're always looking to the past, or looking to the future, but it's this moment. This is the only moment you and God have right now, because when you get to the future, it'll be the present. It's now.

He has been so helpful for me, because it's in me so deep, I need someone to help catch it in me. And so it has changed something in me every day to begin to look for Him in the now, in the moment, right now. What does He have for me? However great, however subtle, strong, gentle, what does it matter? Just what does He have for me? What grace might He have for me this day, not just some day way out there? And if we're not careful, our escapism that is inherently within us, we can come and bring that in and impose it over the message of the resurrection.

Meaning, if I really got the resurrection, if I really experienced the resurrection, then Jesus would help me escape. I wouldn't even have to escape. I would have like Jesus-empowered escapism.

I could get out of this sucky now and live all my dreams, and He would do it. He would be responsible for it. And so then we plead for the resurrection, and when that doesn't happen, we feel even a little ripped off at Him.

I'd say, I don't want to hear another resurrection message. Just tried that. Been there, done that.

Bought the popular shirt. Sorry, very popular here. And so we become a little resistant even.

Don't talk about the resurrection. I tried that. They realized Jesus was alive, and they went to their home, because the resurrection brought spiritual life right to where they were.

Right around their family dinner tables. Right in the morning, cup of coffee. Sure, it may take them around the world, some other point for the sake of the gospel, but it wasn't to escape.

It actually brought spiritual life this way, right then, right into parenting, right into all the fishing. I think I've been trying to escape from all that stuff, escape from the mundaneness of today, so I could find the resurrection. And here Jesus' resurrection has always been trying to come into my day and bring His life there.

They realized Jesus was alive, and they went to their own homes. What is the equivalent of that for you? Verse 11. Can we get that put up there in a few more verses? Remember the days we used to all have our Bibles? There we go.

Might as well continue a little bit on. It starts with the words, but Mary, because Peter and John have some sense of resolve. They ran there in distress.

Now they're curious, kind of excited, comforted, but Mary hasn't made her way back to the tomb yet. In fact, she gets there. The chaps have left.

Classic. And so she just goes outside the tomb, and she just weeps. And there's something so beautiful about those tears.

She just misses Him. She just wants Him. Life was, felt like torment for her before she met Jesus.

And she's like, I don't know what I'm going to do now. She's literally heartbroken. There's something very beautiful.

I think we can want resurrection for all kind of purposes, and this is some of the ways we put our stuff on the resurrection. If you want the resurrection for any other reason than you want Jesus, you have some distortion there. Even if like, oh, then He'll make all my dreams happen.

It's great to dream, but if your dreams are more important to you than Jesus, she just missed Jesus. There's not even self-pity going on here. It's literally just misses Him.

What am I going to do without Jesus? The word weeping here does not refer to just some gentle tear trickling down her face. It is uncontrolled, unrelenting, sobbing. It is wailing.

She is undone. As she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb, but she couldn't really see clearly because her eyes are so full of tears. It says she saw two angels in white.

Well, we know later they're angels. She couldn't see clearly enough to see that they were angels. Two angels dressed in white sitting where the body of Jesus had laid, one at the head, one of the feet.

They say to her, woman, why are you weeping? No, it's interesting. She answers them, but at no point does she have enough togetherness to know why are these two happy chappies sitting in the tomb,

wearing iridescently white clothing, looking terribly cheerful, seem like they know me. Doesn't McNamara none of this strike you as odd? Like two guys just hanging out in a tomb, looking, you know, awful charming with a kind of white you can't get at the laundromat.

But they ask her, woman, why are you weeping? That is not a telling off. Remember they're angels. What does an angel do? Greek word angelos means messenger.

So everything they do is a message. There's two witnesses. That's a message.

They're sitting where Jesus' head and where his feet lie. Everything is resurrected. Where they're strategically positioned is a message.

What they're wearing is a message. They're literally bringing the purity and glory of heaven. Part of where they come from is they're even clothed with it.

It's part of the message. Everything they do and say, even where they sit, is part of the message. They're messengers.

But the question is also part of the message. God sends the angel to care about her tears. And I find this amazing that this is the most epic moment in human history.

The whole redemption of the world has just been won and the Lord just sends these two angels because Mary Magdalene is crying. He doesn't overlook this. It's important to him.

Woman, why are you weeping? They want to get her talking about this. They've taken away my Lord. I don't know where they've laid him.

And at that moment, the angels have served their purpose. They must make way for the greater one. And now Jesus himself is standing in front of her.

Now the sorrow that is beautiful is blinding. Very important resurrection theme. Sorrow, prolonged sorrow, has the power to produce blindness, to obscure God.

She is in her sorrow because she is missing Jesus, and her sorrow is now causing her to miss Jesus. He is right in front of her and she can't see it because of the sorrow. And so we must know what to do with sorrow.

And we must know when it's kind of reaching an end of a time. And we must know, God, sorrow can be a beautiful thing, but sorrow without hope is not Christian sorrow. St. Paul said we do not mourn like those without hope.

He didn't say we don't mourn, but he said we have a distinct kind of mourning. It's always full of hope. Mary had lost her hope in this.

Sorrow had overtaken her and now won't leave her. And so there are some cues to be taken from this, that Jesus can be literally dropping linen napkins like tablecloth, like this, like, and you can't see them. I can't see them.

Literally, he could just be everywhere like, I hope they're going to get this soon. He can be leaving empty tombs everywhere in front of us, and we look at the very gift that he's given us, and all we see is the bad.

Oh, I bet there's someone stole it.

We have the worst possible interpretation of amazing things. So again, where is this right in front of you and me, and we can't yet see him, because sorrow and loss have clouded our eyes. I'm having a ball the last month looking, seeing Jesus everywhere.

I am having an absolute ball. I've been praying over these passages. I want to experience resurrection the old-fashioned way.

I want to enter it into the way Mary entered into it. I want to enter into a way Peter and John entered it, not impose all of my own ideas under the resurrection. And so I'm just asking, give me linen tablecloths, open my eyes.

I know that there's sorrow. Let me see, and I'm just seeing them everywhere. So that's a key resurrection theme.

Because you're sorrow, Jesus feels far, when in fact, he's near, and you don't know it. This is the disciples on Emmaus Road. Jesus comes up and talks to them, and they're, same thing, they're leaving Jerusalem.

They're sad, they're mourning, and Jesus comes up to them and says, what are you so sad about? Jesus asks them that, and it says their eyes were kept from recognizing him, which raises the question, what kept their eyes? The very next verse is, talks about their sadness. We can have an, we can actually build a relationship with sadness. Believe me, I've been through tons of sad times.

I just don't want to have an unhealthy relationship with it. It does, it comes, it does its work, and then I need to know how to let go of it, or it will blind me. If I had more time, I'd work through the rest of this passage.

I could just keep going right through the resurrection passage for hours, like something like out of the book of Acts, until people are falling out windows, but I probably better not do that. It's not a bad, where do we see them? I, today I went into that prayer, and as soon as I went into prayer, oh my goodness, the Lord just came to me. I was literally like, I was a school boy.

I was so excited to spend the day with the Lord, and here I was getting texts today from old school friends that are arranging a summer get together. One of our friends had died of cancer a few months ago, so there's a memorial down in the United States, and I've been invited to go to this, and I'm just in a group text, which is a little weird, because they're all, they're talking about, we are going to drink tequila through the whole night, and remember the glory days. So I just piped up and said, just so you know, I'm in the glory days.

End of conversation. I thought that they were going to say it really, tell us about this. So I want to talk about the glorified Christ has given, I'm in my glory days.

I've never been happier in my whole life. End of the conversation. I didn't even need tequila.

So then I got, went to the gym for a little bit before coming here, and met a guy at the gym, and I said, I just told him about this thing, and I've been invited to this, and I told this young guy, sorry, I hope he's here. He might be here. It's hard to see him here.

I told him about this, and I told him, these are my glory days. I said, the resurrected Jesus has brought me into his resurrection. The glorious Jesus.

Days have never been better. And so I said, you come, come out to church with me tonight. I want to tell you about the resurrection.

All right. So he said, if not tonight, I'll come tomorrow morning, because I see him. I'm starting to see him.

No, it's still coming over the horizon. It's the early days. Wait till midday.

I mean, literally, just the sun just barely coming, and I am so captivated, arrested by his resurrection, and the sun has barely begun to come over the horizon. Do you remember what Paul does with talks? At midday, while I was on the road, that's his conversion experience, and literally blinded him. Saul, who was persecuting church, he got thrown to the ground and blinded, because Jesus, in his resurrection, came in a full midday experience.

Like, the brightness of it, and literally took away his eyesight for three days. But when his eyesight come back, the one thing he could see more clearly than anything in his life was Jesus Christ. And he lived for him, and preached the resurrection every single day for the rest of his life.

Oh, my goodness. Okay, so I don't want to make a weird change. Please, whatever he's saying to you, I'm giving you some steps to walk into the resurrection, but I can't make those steps for you.

Peter and John had to run to the tomb. Mary had, even in her broken state, she peeked down like this into the tomb. And so I'm going to ask, wherever you are, I want you to bow your heads, and I want you to pray, and ask Jesus for the grace to enter into his risenness, and to enter into it his way.

Not yours. To enter into it his way. Even if that is one folded face cloth at a time.

Whatever his pace is, whatever his way is, and what would be that that he has for you tonight? We're heading into the resurrection the old-fashioned way. The Bible way. The apostolic way.

So just find your own words. Lord Jesus, I believe. I know what the empty tomb means.

I just need to know what it means for me. I'm learning the resurrection does not mean utopia. The resurrection does not mean spiritual escapism.

It doesn't mean the dishwasher will never break down again. It means I don't care anymore if it does. I just want Jesus.

Life does not have to be more ideal than that. I just want Jesus. That's what Mary wanted.

And if I have Jesus in his risenness, then none of those things will undo me anymore. That's it. Keep praying.

Feel just the sense that there's an open-heartedness. You're opening hearts, and that affects the spiritual atmosphere. We open our hearts to him, and the heavens are open over open hearts.

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