

Title: FAITH IN FULL BLOOM, JOHN 20:1 – 18
(Chatham, NJ; 04/05/15, AM) [E – Character Analysis]

Theme: Watch as Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene progress from their first encounter with faith in Christ through development of that faith to crisis and finally faith in full bloom.

Purpose: To recognize our own travails of faith and to understand the slow and sometimes painful development of faith in others.

Introduction:

1. Once we've been Christians for a long time, we may forget how difficult it was at the beginning stages of faith—like advanced athletes who forget what the basics were like.
2. Today we look at the faith of Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene, three people who first encountered the resurrected Jesus.
3. We are not concerned with reconciling the accounts that have slightly different details; we want to understand the progression of their faith and the difficulties they encountered along the way to complete faith at the Resurrection.
4. Only the Resurrection can explain the change in all their lives.

I. Peter: a Perfect Storm of Faith

A. First encounter

1. John 1 – Peter meets Jesus even before he calls him away from his nets
2. Peter is always the “ready for action” disciple: first to confess, first to walk on the water, first to draw the sword, but the only one to openly deny Jesus
3. He was the perfect storm of action and words

B. Developing faith

1. John 6:68-69 illustrates his development
2. Despite others leaving, Peter recognizes that Jesus has “the words of life”
3. He confesses that Jesus is the Holy One of God
4. He provides leadership: he doesn't wait for others to lead

C. Crisis

1. He commits to standing with Jesus no matter what, John 13:37
2. Crisis in the courtyard: Peter denies that he was with Jesus, John 18:25-27
3. Luke 22:62 tells us that he went out and wept bitterly
4. He failed

D. In Full Bloom

1. Peter runs to the tomb, John 20:1-10
2. Later he sees Jesus
3. Jesus forgives him and restores him
4. Acts 2 – Peter takes the lead; he doesn't back down in the face of opposition

II. John – Reasons to Believe

A. First encounter – Mark 1:16-20

1. Could have met or heard about Jesus earlier
2. John left a successful business: his father had hired servants
3. He and his brother were not desperately poor: it is a false narrative that assumes the disciples were driven by poverty (just as it is not true that the Islamic terrorists today are driven by their economic deprivation)
4. John was a committed idealist: one of the “Sons of Thunder,” Mk. 3:17

B. Developing faith

1. John saw all the “signs” that he points out in his Gospel
2. Changing water to wine was one of them, John 2:11
3. He was privy to the Transfiguration and the raising of Jairus’ daughter

C. Crisis

1. He and James were rebuked for their zeal, Luke 9:51-55
2. Both brothers wanted power and prestige, Mark 10:35ff.
3. Their request is denied

D. In Full Bloom

1. He encounters the empty tomb with Peter
2. Peter’s companion early in Acts
3. He writes the Gospel of John to offer eternal life

III. Mary Magdalene – the Gift of First Sight

A. First encounter

1. Luke 8:2 – possessed by seven demons (Mk 16:9)
2. Not the sinful woman who wipes his feet with her hair

B. Developing Faith

1. She accompanies the disciples with other women, Luke 8:1-3
2. Like John, she must have been a person of some monetary means: she and other women provide for Jesus’ ministry

C. Crisis

1. Along with many other women, they witnessed the crucifixion, Mark 15:40-41
2. She brought spice to anoint the body, Mk. 16:1

D. In Full Bloom

1. She gets the first encounter with the risen Christ, John 20:11-18
2. Luke 24:10-11, the disciples don’t believe them at first
3. We don’t see her after this, but we know she believed

Conclusion:

1. Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene testify to us today of the truth of the resurrection.
2. Their witness transcends time.
3. That such a dramatic change could come over them demonstrates the truth of the event.
4. We are here today to witness to the same resurrection and to give you the opportunity to express your belief in it.