

Kev's sermon notes for eGroups

Sunday, April 5, 2021 – Easter Sunday

Elevation Church - Broadcasting from Ballantyne Campus – Charlotte, NC USA

Pastor: Steven Furtick

Sermon Title: “But That is Not All You Are – When we label something, it accommodates our assumptions - Don't Trust the Summary - Never Define God by our worst moments - Celebrate the lateness of God - The disciple that expressed the most powerful testimony of faith in the gospel also had the greatest doubts – Honestly admit that every day does not feel like Easter in your heart - Will you welcome resurrection?”

Elevation Worship

- “Rattle” – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrAdbH28gIg>
- “Resurrection” with amazing vocals from a guest singer – dang!
- “Mercy of God – Goodness and Mercy and The Power of the Blood - What the Mercy of God Can Do” with Chris Brown as lead vocals.
- “Nothing But the Blood of Jesus”
- “Graves to Gardens” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwX1f2gYKZ4>

Scripture for this week:

- John 20: The Empty Tomb - 20 Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. Mary Magdalene Sees the Risen Lord 11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ” 18 Mary Magdalene

came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.”

- John 20: “Seeing and Believing - 24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” 26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” 27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” 28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” 30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”
- John 11: 32-44: “32 Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” 37 And some of them said, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?” Lazarus Raised from the Dead - 38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.” 40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.” 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

Sermon Title: “But That is Not All You Are – When we label something, it accommodates our assumptions - Don’t Trust the Summary - Never Define God by our worst moments - Celebrate the lateness of God - The disciple that expressed the most powerful testimony of faith in the gospel also had the greatest doubts – Honestly admit that every day does not feel like Easter in your heart - Will you welcome resurrection?

- **Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don’t have to walk this walk alone? – See www.elevationchurch.cc.**
- **Interested in joining Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**
- **Interested in leading an eGroup? See: www.elevationchurch.cc**
- **Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**
- **Interested in attending or leading a watch party: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**

- Here Comes Church:
 - Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
 - Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don't have to walk this walk alone? – See www.elevationchurch.cc.
 - Recall the testimony of a woman that was in an abusive relationship and moved in with her parents with only three laundry baskets – that also grew up with drug addiction and lost her best friend on Jan. 10, 2020 – and was then baptized on Jan. 10, 2021 following the release of “Graves Gardens” – She turned a day of pain (the loss of her best friend) to a day of rebirth.
 - Old Church Basement – Forthcoming album release – quote from Going back to the place where we discovered worship for the first time – not a physical place - accessing our first love (within ourselves) – bringing you back to a pure place – absent of self-consciousnesses.”
 - Release of “Jireh” from Elevation Church and Maverick City Music
- Opening prayer by Holly Furtick on 4/5/2021: “Church of God is alive and well – Recall the encounter Mary Magdalene had with Jesus in John chapter 20 – Are you looking for Jesus and are you desperately looking for him? If this is you – I can promise you that every time I look to Jesus – every time I cry out to him - He is so faithful – and He speaks to me because he is so personal-able – My prayer for us today is that Jesus speaks a personal word into our lives – as we worship the risen Savior together – that we would experience his presence – and that we realize his presence – Lord we welcome you in this place – every person that is worshiping together all over the world – we welcome you into our hearts today – Lord, speak to us today because we need a word from you – and that we celebrate our risen king – who is present in this place – in Jesus name we pray amen.”
- **Opening prayer and comments by Pastor Furtick on 4/5/2021: “Happy Easter everybody – We praise you Lord – King of kings – Lord of lords – We lift you high – We recognize that because you live, we live tomorrow – and I declare in the name of Jesus the same power that raised Christ from the dead is operative in this moment – so Lord let this power flow – let this mind set flow – let these miracles flow – we thank you God that we are in the middle of something that we will only understand on the other side – However we have a point of reference – because our faith rests in an empty tomb – and we do not have to have a lot of evidence to have a lot of faith – Lord we thank you that not only do we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ as an accomplished fact – So is our forgiveness – So is our healing – So is our joy – So is our peace – all of these things we thank you for – we thank you in advance for all of the things that you do in our lives – in Jesus’ name we pray amen.”**
- This is my 16th Easter sermon with you at Elevation Church.
- On the contrary, Easter is a hard day to preach because everyone thinks they know the story – the passage we’re about to share with each other today, you’ve probably heard before however I think we will discover something that you haven’t seen in the text.
- See John 20: 24-29.
- Be careful of what you ask for.
- Say this to each other: I know that you’re nice – I know that you’re a good Christian – I know that you’re occasionally moody – and you might even be a little crazy – but that is not all you are.
- We judgmental church people like calling Thomas “doubting Thomas” – we give disciples short names – Peter gets to be called “the rock” – Peter cursed somebody out when they accused him of

being part of Jesus's church – but we don't call Peter "profanity Peter" – we can assign labels to anything – what if we called someone a hypocrite that had the name hunter – and labeled him as Hypocrite Hunter – would that be fair? If Tom lost his temper once, should we label him "tantrum Tom" – we love to label things – If Camille struggles with eating, should we label her calorie Camille?

- We love to label things because once we label them we can be lazy – and don't necessarily have to do the work to fix them – where we remind ourselves of something we don't want to admit.
- If any other of the disciples were in the same situation as Thomas they would've probably been labeled the same.
- **The Bible says the Thomas was not present when Jesus showed up – and it's wrong to label Thomas as "doubting Thomas" - Guys in particular love to label – and we still talk about assigning numbers to people - like how much a guy can bench press – or assign dollars to our worth and talking about how much we made – when we label something, it accommodates our assumptions. But God tells us that is not all we are. We try to identify ourselves as Christians by the jewelry we wear even though the cross was first a symbol of torture – and sometimes it's easier to label something than to live it.**
- We do not know why Thomas was absent when Jesus revealed himself – and it's pretty unfair to label Thomas as "doubting Thomas" – and we often fill in the blanks and assume things about people – maybe Thomas was just running an errand?
- The other disciples weren't that holy – the Bible says that they have the room locked because they feared the Jewish leadership – even though Jesus had risen, they still have to live in the reality that they were a threat to the Jewish council that represented the established ruling authority – so the celebration of the disciples was also shrouded in fear.
- When we tell people that "we are good" that's all not all we are – we are "good" in a particular area of our lives that we choose to disclose to others.
- Peter didn't have greater faith in Thomas – the only difference between Peter and Thomas was that Peter was present when Jesus revealed himself – Thomas just had a different experience.
- Don't judge people where they are presently because we don't know where they started – maybe Thomas wasn't there because he was scared or maybe he just struggled with punctuality – and we do not know.
- Thomas might not be doubting Thomas at all – he might just be tardy Thomas.
- **A better way to label Thomas will be "honest Thomas" – because Thomas said "I have to see it for myself" – because what your grandparents told you and what you learned in Sunday school may not get you through the real complications of adult life – what would it take for you to believe that God is with you in this moment – and in this season? What would it take for you to believe that God has your kids in his hands? What would it take for you to believe that God knows what is best for you? What would it take for you to believe that God does not relate to you on the basis of those things that you were most ashamed of?**
- Thomas has seen so much and John even says there's so much more happened and they could not write it all down. John says in his gospel that he put things in his book so that we could believe.
- And John includes seven of them:
 - Changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-11)
 - Healing the royal official's son (Jn 4:46-54)

- Healing the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (Jn 5:1-15)
- Feeding the 5,000 (Jn 6:5-14) – from a boy carrying a small buffet.
- Walking on water (Jn 6:16-21)
- Healing the man born blind (Jn 9:1-7)
- Raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1-45)
- We are not all that we are.
- The greatest of who Jesus was – is based on something Jesus didn't do it first – heal Lazarus.
- John states in his gospel that he has told us enough so that we could believe.
- God gives us enough to go on.
- When God confront Moses he doesn't give him the whole description – God gives enough to Moses to go on – none of us have the time for God to tell us fully who God is – because the moment that God tells us everything about him we will want to label God – and the moment we label God we limit God – like we like to label different churches and genres. We continue to want to create a genre about a God - that is worthy of a eternal worship – but, if we just categorize God, we don't have to trust him.
- **Jesus was not present in John chapter 11 to heal his friend Lazarus. In my study, I'm learning a pretty important thing: We can learn just as much about God during periods of absence as we can during his presence. Let me prove this to you. See 2nd Cor 12: This is good instruction when we ask God to do something on our timetable. 2nd Cor 12: *"The Thorn in the Flesh - 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."***
- **See John 11: At first Lazarus is sick and then he's dead. They were not able to get the attention of the healer. If we overgeneralize John 11 we missed the tears that Jesus cried at the tomb of Lazarus. Don't trust the summary – don't try to summarize salvation by simplifying it about heaven and hell.**
- See John 11: 32-44
- Somebody listening to the sermon today thinks it's over – and the limitation they have placed is not on a genre of music – and not on a limitation they have placed on themselves.
- **Jesus wept – huh? Isn't Jesus supposed to be God and isn't he supposed drying tears not crying them? What if all that you've heard about God it's not complete?**
- **What if the God that you've heard about is only a mere sliver of truth – people describe God in many ways – God is a healer - but then someone we love dies – And then we assume that He is not as powerful as he should be - because God didn't do what we thought he would – and this misses the entire basis of true faith – our problem is that what we do with Thomas - is the same thing we do to God – to define ourselves, other people, and God by our worst moment.**
- The danger of the passage of John 11 is that by seeing their expectation unmet – their faith could have discontinued – and there are two perspectives at the tomb of Lazarus.

- See vs. 36: the Jewish leadership questioned the power of Jesus – “couldn’t this man that healed the blind also heal a friend?” Here the people label Jesus based on their limited perspective – because they heard he was a healer and to them - that’s all Jesus was – and if Jesus is the healer and he didn’t heal then it’s over – but sometimes you must have enough faith in the living God to say “God I know that you are a healer but that’s not all you are” – and say things like “God I thought you were the one that was going to keep it from happening but that’s not all you are” – have you ever had God not stop something that he could have?
- A legion of angels could’ve stopped Jesus from going on the cross – Yes he was a King but he was also a carpenter – in the greatest revelation that Jesus ever gave in Scripture as to who he was (raising Lazarus from the grave) – it was done after he didn’t do what he was supposed to do – so let me break this down very simply – we can all provide a summary as to what we are and who we are based on the experiences that we had – and not the potential we carry - Recall the story of a 59 year man who is now a successful “You-Tuber” and is more popular than most people ½ his age. We would be clapping so hard if we realized what we told ourselves could be a stopping point – and the limitless living God is named “I am” – and our lives will never be defined by the categories that we have living inside of us – if God wanted to do something he would’ve done it already – perhaps God wants to do something different in your life – What we thought God is - is not all that He is.
- **Easter is just like the tomb – and we are open to what God has for our lives. Say this out loud: I am open. We were not open as to what we hoped that would have happened – we were not open to what we thought would’ve happened – we were not open to what we think should be best – God - if you can put a 59-year-old on top of the YouTube Mountain – God if you can heal a man that’s been in a grave for four days (where Mary is more concerned about the stench than the man’s potential) – God if you can do that – we are open. God wants you to unlearn your limitations – stop thinking things have to be on one schedule.**
- A Pastor Furtick classic: some of us might be saying “well that kid is smarter than my kid” – well that kid might be peeking too soon – that’s all it is – the fact that your kid has “street-smarts” and maybe some D’s on the report card should not define them – celebrate the lateness of God.
- **Celebrate the lateness of God - Why did God make Thomas wait for a week? So the Thomas can wrestle and learn about God – and about life and not just trust the summary statements. Yes Jesus loves everyone but he also flips tables – when we have a view of God that thinks that God says only soothing things – this is why I hate preaching on holidays – we took something as powerful as the resurrection of Jesus Christ and dressed it in pastel.**
- I’ve got my next Christmas sermon ready to go – you know summary statements – silent night - holy night - all is calm and all is bright – Little Lord Jesus no crying he makes – we all know this is a lie – baby Jesus was in a cold barn and is probably crying – I like this Christmas melody as well - but it’s not true – Here is my next Christmas sermon: “Screaming Jesus.”
- We know Jesus to be a healer – we know Jesus opens blind eyes - And in this season of our lives Jesus has provided for us – And from our perspective this is all that we know about Jesus – And this is what he told Thomas: blessed are those that have not seen and still believe – who is Jesus talking about here? It was not the other disciples because they saw Jesus – I think he’s talking about Mary and Martha – where Mary says “Jesus if you had been here my brother would not have

died” – even now Jesus intentionally missed the opportunity to perform a miracle – when Mary says basically I thought you were a healer? But that’s not all who Jesus is.

- **Whatever we thought Jesus was and whatever we thought Jesus would do – whatever we expect from the hand of God – that is not all you are – Will you say this to God during this Easter season? - we all have our nice pretty picture of our little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay in a barn – and we also have a picture of the great King Jesus who destroys every devil and drives out all darkness – Jesus is also the person that weeps for something that he could have prevented – Jesus is the one with all authority and the one with all of the empathy – we should wonder what else God is.**
- For years we had defined ourselves by our dysfunction – and this is a bit of cop-out – vs. having to grow – because if we diminish ourselves we don’t necessarily have to work towards changing – and there are methods to improve our punctuality and organization – instead of telling ourselves “well I’m just not organized.”
- We should not turn a tool like an ideogram evaluation into an excuse for bad behavior.
- A Pastor Furtick classic: “I am a perfectionist and that’s just who I am” – well you are also a pain in the _____.” That is not all that you are all of the time.
- Should we just carry on like we’re blessed and full of faith with no faults? So how do we deal with this? Let’s go to Thomas – this is an opportunity for Thomas to experience Jesus not through another spectacular miracle – but through a sacred scar – and notice what Thomas wanted to see – he has already seen Jesus walk on water, feed the hungry, and perform miraculous healing – However Thomas never saw Jesus die before – and the experience of the cross would be enough to confuse any of us – How can God be with you - And how can God be for you when you go through something like this – so when Thomas says “my Lord and my God” – one commentator says this is the most powerful expression of faith in all of the Gospels.
- **Consider this: The disciple that expressed the most powerful testimony of faith in the gospel also had the greatest doubts – I think this means that even though we can be skeptics sometimes – that is not all we are – and even though we might be addicted to something right now - that is not all we are – even though that you have a limited yourself to the path in front of you - that is not all you are – it is great to see it and believe it – blessed are you do believe it even though you don’t see it – so if we don’t see God making a way, do we still believe him to be a way-maker? This is the decision of Easter – this is the decision of every day.**
- Don’t trust the summary because people will tell you things that are just too simple.
- **The disciple that expressed the most powerful testimony of faith in the gospel also had the greatest doubts – and I think God gives the most to people who are the most honest as to who they are – and just admit that every day does not feel like Easter in your heart – Jesus showed up to see Thomas a week later – and isn’t it crazy that the only thing that would stop God from revealing himself to Thomas – was his own unbelief.**
- **Stop doubting and believe – makes things so simple. I wish it was that simple.**
- The more I think about it, Jesus was not just trying to get Thomas to doing something mentally – Here is a better translation: stop becoming an unbeliever – and become a believer – when did we become so jaded and filled with opinions of others? – When did we start trusting the summary than we did on the Holy Spirit?

- Will you welcome resurrection? We might be blocking the tomb but God has not – we have called ourselves according to our worst moment - but God has not – we have defined ourselves according to our worst mistake - but God has not.
- Closing prayer by Pastor Furtick on Easter Sunday: “Welcome Resurrection – See this as a new song and a new moment in your lives – as you stand at the edge of a place you thought you never would be – and as we grapple with the reality as to what God is really like – because God didn’t show up at the place and time that we expected him – I declare over your life today – when you think that all hope is gone – and even when you stand in the darkness – even when all of your unmet expectations have caused you to become an unbeliever – even in that moment – the honest heart that welcomes God – the honest soul that confesses your need for him – the lifted hands that surrender all to him – are still a place that He can fill – Father as we stand on this Easter Sunday – and declare an old anthem of a new truth – I pray that resurrection power would fill every heart – Jesus Christ we welcome you into our mist – we welcome you to our tombs – we welcome you to our doubts – we want to touch you and receive your power right now – in Jesus name amen.”
- Here’s a poem that Pastor Steven Furtick wrote a few months ago about Lazarus:

*“I never lose the wonder of this Gospel mystery
 From the heavens came and Savior
 From the ground who rose a King
 Every day is born in darkness
 Every winter yields to spring
 So let us speak of resurrection
 Even in the summary
 As the sisters begged the Savior
 Come at once to Bethany!
 For the one that you love is dying
 But His yes was not to be
 And His weeping begged the question
 Could this friend he could not have healed?
 But He still is resurrection
 Even when the tomb is sealed
 He speaks a whisper in the silence
 Sleeps a harvest in the sea
 Cradled now a new beginning
 In the heart there is belief
 So crucify your hesitation
 Wounded expectation bring
 Will you welcome resurrection?
 Will you crown who is King?”*