



# THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEW CANAAN

SERMON – April 8, 2007

So What?

The Reverend Harold E. Masback, III

## John 20: 1-29

### The Resurrection of Jesus

*20* Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. *2* So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' *3* Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. *4* The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. *5* He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. *6* Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, *7* and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. *8* Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; *9* for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. *10* Then the disciples returned to their homes.

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

*11* But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; *12* and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. *13* They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' *14* When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. *15* Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she 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 in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). *17* Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' *18* Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

### Jesus Appears to the Disciples

*19* When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' *20* After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. *21* Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' *22* When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. *23* If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

### Jesus and Thomas

*24* But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. *25* So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.' *26* A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' *27* Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' *28* Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' *29* Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Every Wednesday night I meet with some Youth Group kids in a group we call Quest for Truth; it's kind of a Bible study/theological question free for all. We were down to the last three minutes of a recent gathering, when a 16 year-old popped one of those questions you couldn't answer fully in three minutes or three hours. "Hey, did you see that "Jesus Tomb" special by the director of Titanic? If they proved those were Jesus' bones in the tomb, would it undermine your faith in the resurrection?"

Wow! What a great question. Now, I've studied enough history and read enough Biblical archeology to know that the "Jesus Tomb" show was much more Hollywood than history, and that the so called science

behind the show was mostly speculation puffed up with sensationalism. But it was still a great question.

Imagine if God himself were to answer the question. God's just up there watching all the cable show hoopla one night, when he leans over to Jesus and asks, "What do they want me to do anyway? Raise you again?" Deciding to settle the hash once and for all, God casts his hand toward the heavens, and summons all the stars into one glittering constellation. Suddenly, in a twist on an old Frederick Buechner story, the entire night sky is ablaze with stars spelling out, "YES, I RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD" signed, "GOD."<sup>1</sup>

People pour out of their homes in wonder, dropping to their knees in the grass out by the garage. Some eyes are moist with tears of hope - the aged, the infirm, the disheartened suddenly bolstered by the assurance of Divine reality. Some eyes are moist with tears of regret for the misspent years, the unnecessary anxiety, the lost opportunities.

At first, churches overflow with sudden converts, and everywhere behavior softens. But, after awhile, folks begin to take even this astonishing display for granted. So God freshens it up, periodically adding colors and music, punctuating the expression with spinning planets and flashing comets, wearing down human resistance until even the most hard-bitten skeptic comes to admit, "Yes, I guess God did raise Jesus from the dead."

This goes on for hundreds of years, until one night when a father leads his little girl out for an after-dinner stroll under God's shimmering star sign. It had always been a beloved little family tradition, a source of endless excited chatter about that night's array. But not this night. For as the little girl's eyes widen and gleam with reflections of the twinkling colors, she tugs on her daddy's hand and asks, "So what? What difference does it make if God raised Jesus from the dead?"<sup>2</sup> And just that quickly, the celestial display vanished. And somewhere God chuckled over the wisdom of children.<sup>3</sup>

You see my friends, we're so caught up in modern rationality, we're so bought into the scientific method that we're quick to turn faith into just another CSI episode.<sup>4</sup> In forensic analysis, historical research, or

medical diagnosis, our technical reason has achieved wonders. It's only natural that we should try to resolve the mysteries of faith with it as well: maintain a detached objectivity, deploy our electronic scanners, and coolly examine the results. We want certainty before engagement, reliability before commitment. Don't we always test the bearing weight of a bridge before we open it to traffic? So also let us first establish the fact of the resurrection, and then we'll consider following Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Only our modern yearning for analytic certainty is tripped up again and again by three snares. First, we're tripped up because spiritual events are inherently ambiguous, always susceptible to responses of faith or skepticism. It was that way on the morning of the resurrection and it's that way today. God seems intent on leaving us our freedom. As C.S. Lewis put it, "God will woo but he will not ravish."<sup>6</sup> As Blaise Pascal put it, "He so regulates the knowledge of Himself that he has given signs of Himself, visible to those who seek Him, and not to those who seek him not. There is enough light for those who only desire to see, and enough obscurity for those who have a contrary disposition."<sup>7</sup>

Second, we're tripped up by the fact that the resurrection was an unprecedented, circuit-blowing event beyond the reach of reductionist analysis. It was that way the morning of the resurrection, and it's even more true today.

Finally, we're well and truly tripped up by the little girl's question. Deep in our souls, down where we really live, it's not the fact of the resurrection that we're after, it's the "so what?"<sup>8</sup> Would a single one of us be sitting here this morning if God had passed by the universe 2000 years ago, scooped Jesus up from the dead, and kept on going with him never to be heard from again? It's not the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead, it's the love for you it revealed, it's the daily relationship with the risen Christ it offers, it's the joyful, flourishing life Christ's risen Spirit empowers.<sup>9</sup> As Buechner wrote, "It's not the objective proof of God's existence that we want but, whether we use religious language for it or not, the experience of God's presence. That is the miracle that we are really after. And that is also, I think, the miracle that we really get."<sup>10</sup>

Look again at John's resurrection story. It's filled with candid acknowledgments of the inherent mystery and

ambiguities of that morning - all the confused racing back and forth, all the mis-identifications. Nobody really comes to believe the resurrection by analysis, by proposition, or even by proclamation. They come to faith by engagement, by relationship, by encounter with the risen Lord.<sup>11</sup>

Mary Magdalene trundles along the deserted lane in the predawn dark, sight blurred by tears, steps laden with loss. Her attention, her consciousness, her soul are tethered to the aching void in her heart. She had followed him; she had served him; she had loved him. And now he was dead. Mary doesn't come to faith by detached analysis - the empty tomb the angelic presence, even the risen Christ standing before her mean nothing to her. Mary comes to faith by love, by relationship, by encounter. Mary comes to faith only when her beloved calls her by name, "Mary!" "Rabbouni" she cries in a rush of recognition, reaching out to embrace him. Her excited report to the disciples will be, "I have seen the Lord."

Thomas probably thought his colleagues were mushy headed mystics. He'd been reluctant to get on the messiah bandwagon in the first place. But Jesus' patient love had slowly won him over; slowly Thomas, too, had come to follow, to serve and to love. And now it had come to this, another messiah crushed, another set of hopes dashed, another lesson in the remorseless invincibility of Rome.

Thomas was more than a little mad at himself for falling for it in the first place, after all, he had known better. And he was more than a little exasperated that his friends were now chattering about taking Rome on again just because some vaguely recognizable apparition had walked through their walls. Maybe they'd been out of town for that whole arrest, scourging, and crucifixion business. Anticipating our CSI mindset, Thomas wants cold, analytic proof, *"Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."*

But, in the end, Thomas doesn't come to faith by detached analysis either. The reports of the empty tomb, even the first hand testimonies of his friends don't move him, and look closely at the story, he never does put his finger into the nail holes or his hand into Jesus' side. Thomas comes to faith by love,

by relationship, by encounter. He heard that voice he'd come to love invoking peace, and then he saw Jesus making his way directly across the room to greet him. There was more love than reproach in Jesus' eyes, they seemed to say, "It's OK, Thomas. I love you. Is this what I must do to regain your trust? Here, put your hand in my wounds." And suddenly, Thomas heard himself exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!"

Do you see the pattern? It's almost the precise reverse of our technical reason and scientific method. Mary Magdalene and Thomas hadn't demanded reliable proof before they committed to following Jesus all those months before the crucifixion; they hadn't awaited the certainty of seeing before they engaged the life of faith as his disciples. It was their years of following, serving and loving Jesus before the crucifixion that prepared their eyes for their spiritual encounter with him after the resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

As Blaise Pascal wrote in the 16th century, "It is the heart that perceives God, not the reason. That is what faith is: God is perceived by the heart, not the reason."<sup>13</sup> Or, to paraphrase Cornell West, faith is walking out onto a bridge you cannot see and finding that it holds.

Perhaps, you object, this is all very well and good for Mary Magdalene and Thomas, John's account favors them with the distinct advantage of following and serving and loving Jesus before the crucifixion, and the even greater advantage of seeing him after the resurrection. John's Gospel is a fine handbook for those who have seen the risen Christ face to face, but what use is it to the rest of us who have not? What use is it to the rest of us who must now navigate the mysteries of a post-ascension world?

And the answer, of course, is that John wrote his gospel in a post-ascension world for a post-ascension world.<sup>14</sup> The last eye witnesses to the resurrection were dying out, how would a new generation come to faith? How would generations to come learn to see Christ's risen Spirit in their midst?

John's tutorial in spiritual seeing begins in the first chapter and continues throughout the gospel. John writes in his prologue, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father's heart who has made him known." [1:18] Jesus invites his

disciples to “come and see.” [1:39.] He proclaims, “I came into this world . . . so that those who do not see may see” [9:39.] At the last supper, Jesus tells Philip, “whoever has seen me has seen the father.” [14:9].

In fact, in just four verses in chapter 14, John delivers the most direct, the most succinct prescription for spiritual sight in all of Scripture. You might call it the “John Code” to the resurrection.

Jesus gathers the disciples in the upper room for the last supper, a last opportunity to teach them how to recognize, how to experience, how to see his risen Spirit after the crucifixion. Preparing them for the reunion depicted in today’s gospel lesson, Jesus says, in chapter 14, verses 19-21: “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. . . They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; . . . and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” And then in verse 26, “. . .the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

Do you see the code? The “so what” of the resurrection is that Christ lives and because he lives we also will fully live. This resurrection becomes manifest for us whenever Christ reveals himself to us; and Christ reveals himself to us whenever we keep his commandment to love. We see the risen Christ whenever we love, because, as John will write, “God is love.” [1 John 4:7.]<sup>15</sup>

Just four days later, the disciples have stumbled through the anxiety and guilt and anguish of the crucifixion. It is now Easter Sunday night, and they are covering behind locked doors in the upper room. And now each of those promises and prescriptions of the last supper are lived out. Jesus appears, invoking his peace, just as he said he would, breathing the Holy Spirit on them just as he said he would, the Spirit reminding them of Thursday night’s prescription just as Jesus said it would. And having anointed and commissioned his little following as a church, as a body of Christ, Christ sends his church into the world to live out his command of love and forgiveness just as he said he would.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, my friends, the great “so what” of the resurrection is the raising of this body of Christ we call church. It is here that we experience Christ’s spirit alive together, and it is here that we learn to love and so learn to live fully together. Death is defeated, for Christ’s Spirit lives on through Christ’s church. Invincible Rome has long since been consigned to history’s dust bin, but the work of Christ’s church now goes on through over a billion brothers and sisters in the faith.

If every Easter sermon needs an illustration, then my illustration this year is you. Every time an aged patient’s shoulders are warmed by a hand knit prayer shawl, Christ is risen. Every time an anxious freshman is adopted by YG seniors, Christ is risen. Every time our eyes well up with tears as our choir sings God’s praise, Christ is risen. Every time astonished Biloxi folks marvel at the new homes built for them by our Operation Feed My Sheep, Christ is risen. Every time we gather at the table, strangers made brothers and sisters by bread and cup. Christ is risen.

In fact, every time we defy the power of death by proclaiming His life. Guess what: Alleluia, Alleluia, He is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.

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1 NPR’s All Things Considered reported on April 7, 2007 about the holy fire in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, which is slightly similar to the objective proof. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, every Easter vigil the Eastern Patriarch in Jerusalem goes down into the place reputed to be the tomb of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The spot previously is inspected by authorities to make sure that there is nothing that could be used to make fire. He emerges alone with a flaming torch. No one knows where the fire comes from, and no one knows how it was lit. This fire is then spread and used to light candles of the faithful. See <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9453870>.

2 Consider Kierkegaard’s thought on this issue from a Journal Entry: “What I really lack is to be clear in my mind *what I am to do*, not what I am to know, except in so far as a certain understanding must precede every action. The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes *me* to do. . . . What good would it do me if the truth stood before me, cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not, and producing in me a shudder of fear rather than a trusting devotion? Must not the truth *be taken up into my life*? That is what I now recognize as the most important thing.” From *The Prayers of Kierkegaard*, ed. Perry D. LeFevre (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), 129-130.

3 See Matthew 11:25: “At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.’”

4 Henry Chadwick outlines five “ideas” that pervade the writings of Gotthold Lessing, the father of the Enlightenment: (1) Firsthand experience is necessary for certainty about past events. The testimony of witnesses is inherently unreliable and cannot give certainty. (2) Direct experience of Christ would have made it easier to believe in him. (3) The notion of the divinity of Christ is unreasonable. He is best thought of as a teacher and example for imitation. (4) “Events cannot prove ‘truths.’ Truths of morals and metaphysics belong to a non-event category.” (5) Concerning God’s relation to history: “The realm of historical experience is one of process and flux, the sphere of becoming, not of being. Everything in this flowing process of history is relative, nothing absolute. God, on the other hand, belongs to the ideal world, and truths of divine revelation are timeless truths,” From Chadwick’s “Introduction” to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Lessing’s Theological Writings* trans. and ed. Henry Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), 31. Consider Lessing’s short essay “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power, which argues that one cannot accept the testimony of scripture concerning miracles because, first, one cannot know it from experience. “If I had actually seen him do miracles... I would have gained so much confidence that I would willingly have submitted my intellect to his, and I would have believed him in all things in which equally indisputable experiences did not tell against him.” (52). Second, one has no reason to trust the experience of people one does not know. “I am no longer in Origen’s position; I live in the eighteenth century, in which miracles no longer happen” (52). Rather, “I must believe in other arguments more appropriate to my age... The problem is that this proof of the spirit and of power no longer has any spirit or power, but has sunk to the level of human testimonies of spirit and power” (52).

5 Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard decried detached objectivity that needed certainty before commitment. Kierkegaard exposes the weakness of the type of knowing that requires certainty before it can commit: it cannot finally give itself, even if it thinks it is giving itself, because, by definition, it only believes what it can see and therefore cannot believe in love. It is therefore “self-deceived” in the worst possible way, for it misses out on true existence, which is true life in God. Responsibility is evaded by uncertainty and “all of human life is transformed to one great excuse” (Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* trans. Howard and Edna Hong [New York: Harper Collins, 1962], 120.) Unfortunately, the excuse will not hold up before the Judge who sees all. Kierkegaard shows how the choice is stark: love is either illusory or it “is before everything else and remains when all else is past” (*Works of Love*, 24). If it is the latter, the only way to know it is to practice it.

Kierkegaard admonishes his reader: “Believe in love! This is the first and the last thing to be said about love if one is to know what love is” (*Works of Love*, 32). One must first of all repent and reject the modern tendencies to objectify, abstract, and believe in a way that requires nothing. Johannes Climacus, one of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms says, rather, that God is “a supreme conception that cannot be explained by anything else but is explainable only by immersing oneself in the conception itself”

(Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* trans and ed. Howard and Edna Hong [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 192], 220). Christian faith involves “immersing oneself in existing” in order for true knowledge of it to be possible (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 560). He contrasts the “existence-communication” of Christianity with the static, objective abstractions of speculative thought. Speculative thought, Kierkegaard says at the beginning of his first discourse, in “conceited shrewdness, proud of not being deceived,” insists, “one should believe nothing which he cannot see by means of his physical eyes.” In that case, “one ought to give up believing in love” (*Works of Love*, 23). The sign that one believes in more than one can see with one’s physical eyes, the only way to get past the “knowledge” flooding existence out of one’s life, is to live love. This is what it means to immerse oneself in existence. Love “must be believed and it must be lived” (*Works of Love*, 26). One cannot be certain about love and, only on the basis of one’s certainty, engage in love. So long as one believes only what one can see (as modern people are prone to do), one is suspended in one’s relationships and can never commit.

6 C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1961), 38.

7 Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York, Penguin: 1995), 118.

8 Pascal writes, “Man’s true nature, his true good and true virtue, and true religion are things which cannot be known separately,” (*Pensees*, 393). “Proofs only convince the mind; habits provide the strongest proofs and those that are most believed... We must acquire an easier belief, which is that of habit. With no violence, art or argument it makes us believe things, and so inclines all our faculties to this belief that our soul naturally falls into it,” (*Pensees*, 821).

9 In an article about the way it is possible to believe the resurrection, Harvard theologian Sarah Coakley argues something parallel to this, “Religious beliefs and doctrines are not to be demonstrated by ‘evidences’. Embracing them is more like the adopting of a whole new way of life, or ‘picturing’ differently, or making a particular narrative central to one’s existence, than coolly adjudicating on their likelihood with the ‘speculative intelligence.’” Sarah Coakley, “The Resurrection: The Grammar of ‘Raised’,” in D.Z. Phillips and Mario von der Ruhr, eds., *Biblical Concepts and Our World* (Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion; New York and Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 177-78. Along the same lines, she quotes twentieth century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein from Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* trans. Peter Winch, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984): “Christianity is not a doctrine, not, I mean, a theory about what has happened and what will happen to the human soul, but a description of something that actually takes place in a human life” (28e).

Christianity is not based on a historical truth; rather, it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather,

believe through thick and thin, which you can only do as the result of a life (32e)

10 Fredrick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007).

11 Much has been written on the epistemology of religious experience. Yale Divinity School Dean Harry Attridge, in an unpublished article on the resurrection in John, talks about the different ways of believing the resurrection: “Spirit-powered forgiveness is, in the structure of resurrection chapters, surrounded by relationships with Jesus, which are built on new encounters with his mysterious transformed presence. In those encounters, those relationships, faith happens, on the basis of physical signs (20:8), on the basis of a personal address of shepherd to his own sheep (20:16), in the challenge to believe without seeing (20:29), and in the sharing of a meal with a stranger (21:12). The encounters of John 20 and 21 might be taken as a typology of kinds of faith-producing moments, which may or may not have some hierarchical value.

“The encounters with the resurrected one also serve one other important function in the economy of this Gospel’s theology, which is so much concerned with the foundations of belief... The gospel’s critique of a naïve belief on the basis of signs hangs as a background warning to the reader who would take the resurrection as an event that suffices to compel belief in the Resurrected One. The Gospel knows him to be elusive, now inaccessible to the sight of potential disciples, not easily recognizable even when he was with his own. Tokens of his resurrection (read: the accounts of the empty tomb in resurrection narratives) and visions (read: the list of authoritative witnesses that Paul provided) could cause some to believe in the reality of his abiding presence, but it is only the experience of that presence that provides any ground for belief, and that presence is encountered in the community where the Spirit resides.” Harold Attridge, “Resurrection in the Fourth Gospel,” delivered at SNTS Johannine Literature Seminar, Aberdeen, 2006.

David Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, writes along similar lines: “[The] truth [of the resurrection] is inevitably self-involving. It cannot be adequately taken in unless we begin to be transformed. It is not just our ideas about reality that are challenged: Our commitments, hopes, desires, and behaviors are involved too. This is because it is not just ‘an event’: it is about the new presence of a particular person, and we can never relate adequately to people unless we are willing to be affected by them. Part of the authenticity of the first witnesses lies in the way they were transformed and lived the rest of their lives. So the truth of the resurrection is not a truth about which we can appropriately say ‘How interesting!’ and then go on to some other investigation. It has the urgency of the most relevant news—like shouting ‘First!’ or whispering ‘Will you marry me?’” From *The Shape of Living*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 182-3.

Sarah Coakley, who Attridge references, argues that even the belief in the veracity of the historical resurrection requires a

transformation of the way in which one understands reality. Ultimately, this transformation comes only through love. “[The] difference between the believer and the non-believer... cannot finally be explained except by an account of a transformation of the believer’s actual epistemic *apparatus*. We are in the realm here of what some patristic and medieval writers called ‘the spiritual senses’: the transformed epistemic sensibilities of those being progressively reborn in the likeness of the Son,” (Coakley, 169). She goes on to argue:

“Our perception of God, and thus too our grasp of doctrinal verities, does not occur on a flat, procrustean, bed, but is appropriately open to its object only to the extent that the faculties have been progressively purified. According to Origen this process involves three stages, all engendered and sustained by ever-deepening meditation on Scripture: *ethike* (being appropriately formed in the moral life), *physike* (learning to see the world from the perspective of the ‘form’) and *enoptike* (contemplation of the divine itself). The climax of the ‘enoptic’ stage is a deep communion with the eternal word; and, following the rabbis, it is Origen’s insistence that the ultimately indispensable metaphor for this union is an erotic, ‘sensual’ one – the language of the Song of Songs, on which Origen wrote a notable (and notably beautiful) commentary” (Coakley, 173).

12 Coakley writes more about how we can “know” about the resurrection: “How might [the patristic] tradition of the spiritual sense throw light on our initial discussion of the epistemological problem of the resurrection narratives? My suggested response to this is threefold. First we note how this tradition is capable of explaining a range of *different* responses to the risen Christ, even amongst the faithful. Not all responses are equally deep; and the closest recognition... will often – in the era of the church – involve long years of moral and spiritual preparation, prolonged *practice* in ‘sensing’ the presence of Christ. Second, then, this approach also indicates how seeking and recognizing the resurrected Christ requires a *process* of change, one only rarely achieved suddenly... Third, this approach stresses the absolutely crucial significance of the integration of the affective and the erotic in any adequate understanding or ‘knowledge’ of the risen Christ; it does not set the affective/erotic and the noetic off against each other as disjunct alternatives, or even as a complementary duality... “The first feature just delineated indicates how doubt and faith could strangely coexist in response to an ‘appearance’ of the risen Christ (Matthew 28:16-17); or how it might be difficult, *initially*, and prior to some change in one’s normal demands for perceptual evidences, recognise the risen body (John 20:24-28). The second feature, correlatively, underscores how some ‘turning’ in one’s posture or attitude, some difference of perspective or visual angle, or transformation of the nature of physical ‘touch’, might be required in order to grasp the resurrected reality (John 20:11-18). And the third feature, finally, would suggest that a narrowly noetic investigation would take on *nowhere* in this quest; that the evidences of the ‘heart’, and of orienting and worshipful practices of the body, could not be neglected if Christ-as-risen were to be apprehended (Luke 24:28-35),” (Coakley, 175).

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13 Pascal, 424. Or as Attridge wrote, “belief and knowledge come not in the abstract, but precisely from an experience of lived engagement.”

14 For an in-depth explanation of the composition of John’s gospel, see Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* ed. Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 40-89.

15 Wittgenstein writes: “If I am to be REALLY saved, – what I need is *certainty* – not wisdom, dreams or speculation – and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what is needed by my *heart*, my *soul*, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind. Perhaps we can say: Only *love* can believe the Resurrection. Or: It is *love* that believes the Resurrection... What combats doubt is, as it were, *redemption*.... So this can come about only if you no longer rest your weight on the earth but suspend yourself from heaven. Then *everything* will be different and it will be “no wonder” if you can do things that you cannot do no (Culture and Value 33e).” One of Augustine’s favorite images for the Holy Spirit came from the Apostle Paul’s claim in Romans 5.2 that the Spirit is “the love of God poured into our hearts.”

16 Attridge writes: “How is the future of resurrected life, the reader of the rest of the gospel may ask, a present reality? If attentive to the hints of chapters 6 and 14, she will know that it has to do with relationship, with abiding in the Son who abides in the Father. And she may know, from the command that Jesus gave (13:31; 15:11) and parable (15:13) he told that abiding has to do with love, an extravagant love that is willing to sacrifice all for the sake of the “friend.” Abiding in such all consuming, radical love, is to abide in God, as the Johannine epistolographer will remind his addressees (1 John 4:16)... Our hypothetical attentive reader will also have heard, and be anticipating, something about the coming of the Paraclete, who will teach and intercede for believers. She may suspect that in the presence of the Paraclete the reality of new, resurrected life is grounded. Such hopes and suspicions are confirmed, perhaps even rewarded, in the account of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples on Easter night. Jesus now fulfills the promise to provide the Spirit to his disciples in what many have dubbed the Johannine Pentecost.”