

TITLE: "Knowin' Where You're Goin'"

TEXT: John 20:1-18 (NT pp. 114-115)

Introduction – Jesus saves

Satan challenged Jesus to a contest to see who was best on a computer. God said, "I will give you both two hours to do all you can and whoever does the most wins." ...They each sat down at their keyboards and began to type.

They emailed.

They emailed with attachments.

They did spread sheets.

They made cards.

They created charts and graphs.

They made sheets of labels.

They did genealogy reports.

Jesus worked with heavenly efficiency. Satan was faster than ...heck.

Then, 10 minutes before their time was up, lightening flashed across the sky, thunder rolled, and ...the power went off. ...Satan stared at his blank screen and screamed every curse known in the underworld. ...Jesus just sighed.

Finally, the electricity came back on, and each of them restarted their computers. Satan searched frantically and then screamed: "It's gone! It's all GONE! I lost everything when the power went out!

He looked over at Jesus and saw that he was quietly printing out all of his files from the past 2 hours of work. Satan yelled: "That's not fair! He cheated! How come he has all his work and I don't have mine?"

...God looked at Satan, shrugged, and said, ..."JESUS SAVES."

...We know what it means to save on our computers. We know what it means to save money. We know that doctors save lives. But what does it mean that JESUS saves?

A doctor may save a life, but the person will someday die. Jesus says:
 “I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though they die they will live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die”
 (John 11:25, 26).

Those who are saved by Jesus will be resurrected, just as Jesus was resurrected, and they will live with Jesus in heaven forever.

1. Start now

However, if we want to be with the Lord in heaven forever, we have to start now. That’s the way it is with anything important that we may want in the future.

If you want to do well on a test, you have to study beforehand.

If you want to harvest your own vegetables in the fall, you have to start planning and preparing your garden now.

If you want an income when you retire, you have to start saving money now.

If you want to be in heaven with the Lord in 100 years, in 1,000 years, in 1 million years, you have to do what you need to do to be saved now.

2. Jesus is Lord

How DO you get saved? ...The Bible says: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:10).

Let’s take the first phrase first: What does it mean that “Jesus is Lord?” ...When we say “Jesus is Lord” we are saying that Jesus is God. The Gospel of John begins with these words about Jesus who is referred to here as “The Word”:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, forgave the sins of others, raised people from the dead and Jesus will be the final judge of all humankind.

....When you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, you are saying, out loud, that you believe that Jesus is God. That is why one of the questions you answer when you join the church is: “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God?” ...I will be holding a membership class in a few weeks time.

3. God raised Jesus from the dead

The second part to being saved is believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. Many people who base their beliefs on scientific principles cannot accept this. There is no verifiable evidence of resurrection; therefore they think that resurrection is not possible.

I believe that there is a realm where God is in complete control. It's called heaven. In heaven, each being lives in total love, joy and peace. Is there PROOF that heaven exists? No.

I remember that the first Russian cosmonauts who circled the earth came back and had a news conference with their American counterparts. One of the Russians said, "In all my time in space, not once did I see God!"

One of the Americans said, "Ah, but you would have, if you had just stepped out of your capsule."

We won't know for sure that God OR heaven exists until we die. In the meantime, we must accept heaven's existence by faith. I have that faith. Those who are members of this church have that faith. We belong to a group of faithful people stretching back almost 2,000 years who believe that Jesus Christ died and that he rose from the dead and appeared to Mary as it says in the Bible. .

That is why Easter is such an important day in the Christian year. We are gathered here today to celebrate the fact that Jesus DID rise from the dead and to rejoice in the fact that we will also be resurrected.

Let me tell you a story.

In January 2000, leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, invited their favorite son, Billy Graham, to a luncheon in his honor. He was 86 years old at the time. Billy initially hesitated to accept the invitation because he struggles with Parkinson's disease. But the Charlotte leaders said, 'We don't expect a major address. Just come and let us honor you.' So he agreed.

After wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham stepped to the lectern, looked at the crowd, and said, "I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who this month has been honored by Time Magazine as the Man of the Century.

Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it.' Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets.

As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket. The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.'

Einstein looked at him and said, 'Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going.'

Having said that Billy Graham continued, 'See the suit I'm wearing? It's a brand new suit. My wife, my children, and my grandchildren are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and one more occasion.

You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. ...But when you hear I'm dead, I don't want you to immediately remember the suit I'm wearing. I want you to remember this:

I not only know who I am .. I also know where I'm going.'

Conclusion – Future plans

Do YOU know where you are going?

“What do you hope life will be like a 100 years; a 1000 years; a million years?”

If you want to be resurrected and live in heaven with Jesus and those who have faith in Jesus, then you need to start now.

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved, and you will be with Jesus, and Billy Graham and all the faithful in the glorious kingdom of heaven forever and ever and ever.

Amen.

TEXT – John 20:1-18

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

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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.' ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus 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.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, * 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus 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." ' ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.