

# April 20 | Lesson 8

# From Confusion to Clarity

Resurrection Sunday

Focal Passages

Matthew 5:11-12; John 20:1-18

Background Texts

Matthew 5:11-12; John 20

Purpose

To be astonished by the resurrected Jesus in our midst

## **Matthew 5:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. <sup>12</sup>Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you.**

## **John 20:1-18**

**<sup>1</sup>Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know**

**where they’ve put him.” <sup>3</sup>Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. <sup>5</sup>Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn’t go in. <sup>6</sup>Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. <sup>7</sup>He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head. It wasn’t with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup>They didn’t yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.**

**<sup>11</sup>Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup>She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. <sup>13</sup>The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”**

**She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” <sup>14</sup>As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus.**

**<sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”**

**Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.”**

**<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Mary.”**

**She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher).**

**<sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”**

**<sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her.**

**Key Verse: “Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her” (John 20:18).**

### **Connect**

As Mary walked to the tomb, she knew what Jesus’ body would look like. With fragrant spices she meant to anoint her Lord. She wanted his body to receive the dignity he hadn’t while alive. As much as Jesus had loved God, as fully as he’d taught her to love God, as much as he’d taught her about God, she wanted to make his body an offering to God. It was the one thing she could still do for him.

But as she neared the tomb, Mary could see the stone covering had been rolled to the side, the grave exposed (John 20:1). The morning light murky, her brain fogged with grief, she was confused. Why would. . . ? Was someone lurking nearby? She dropped her perfumes and ran. Afraid even to look into the tomb, she just ran to tell Peter (verse 2). Between her tears and heaving breaths, all she could blurt out was, “The stone . . . the tomb . . . it’s open.”

When Peter saw the terror on Mary’s face and realized why she was sobbing hysterically, it was the last straw. They’d gotten away with murder, but messing with Jesus’ dead body. . . . He left on the run, his mind a rage. John left, too (verse 3).

John guessed Peter was headed to the tomb and got there first (verse 4). The grave was ajar,

the linen wrappings lying in a heap. When Peter arrived, he bolted through the tomb's opening. He saw the cloth that had been around Jesus' head, but there was no body anywhere (verses 6-7).

Not hearing any sound from Peter, John squeezed in and immediately was as perplexed as Peter (verse 8). It never occurred to them that Jesus had been raised from the dead (verse 9). All they knew was his body was gone. Where? Why? They had no clue. Shaken, perplexed, they eventually left. They just left (verse 10).

Meanwhile, Mary arrived back at the tomb, grief stricken (verse 11). Her Jesus had been taken from her; now his body was missing. Her spirit broken, she wanted to wail. Instead, she picked up the linen wrapping John had left. Clutching the cloth to her breast, she stepped toward the tomb, knowing she had to peer inside.

Each of us has been scarred by death. We've looked on the faces of loved ones—heartbroken, helpless to turn back the clock, unable to tell them one last time how much we love them. Like Mary, we steel our nerves and eventually get on with the task of living but only because we must. Part of us never recovers. The wound is too deep, the loss too great, and the loneliness too real.

As Mary's eyes adjusted to the dark of the stone tomb, she saw two men sitting where Jesus' body had been (verse 12). Later, she realized the men must have been angels. They

asked her, "Why are you crying?" (verse 13). No longer able to hold back her tears, she broke. "They've taken my Lord. I don't know where."

Mary was suddenly aware that a third man was standing near her (verse 14). But instead of unnerving her, his presence seemed to embolden her. When he asked the same question the two men had asked, she wondered if maybe he was a gardener. "Sir, tell me where you laid him. I only want to anoint his body" (verse 15).

When the man called her by name, she startled. In the eternity of that moment, she recognized the gardener she half feared as the Lord Jesus she fully loved. Unprepared for the emotions that flooded over her when he said, "Mary," unsure how it could be true, she fell into Jesus' arms and clung tightly. "O Rabbi!" (verse 16).

How long she was supported by her Lord, sobbing, she didn't know. But as Jesus gently separated himself from her, he said, "Mary, let go. I want you to relay a message to my brothers" (verse 17). Did she know this would be the last time she'd see him? Mary let go; made her way to the disciples; and declared God's kingdom come. "I've seen the Lord!" (verse 18).

After Mary left the tomb the second time that first Easter, Scripture never again mentions anyone returning to Jesus' burial site. Instead, ever since, a jubilant church has congregated weekly, humbly thankful that not even death can separate its loved ones from the Lord they serve.

## Inspect

**Introduction.** For additional information on the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew, consult “Jesus’ Blessings in the Sermon on the Mount” and the introduction to Unit One.

Matthew 5:11-12, a postscript to the eight beatitudes Jesus pronounced on God’s people in the Sermon on the Mount, declares that people are blessed and in the good company of God’s prophets when others demean them because of their relationship to Jesus.

The Easter story of Jesus’ resurrection consists of two essential components. The first is the Easter morning discovery that Jesus’ tomb is empty. The second is the report of various appearances of Jesus to his closest followers. Both components appear in the Focal Passage from John 20, which can be subdivided into verses 1-10 and verses 11-18.

In verses 1-10, seeing that the stone covering to Jesus’ tomb has been removed, Mary Magdalene hurries back into the city of Jerusalem to alert Jesus’ disciples. Peter and another disciple hurried to the tomb, where they quickly determined that Jesus’ body is gone; all they found were the used burial cloths. However, they were not able to make any sense of the fact.

Verses 11-18 report that Mary then returned to the garden tomb. After a brief encounter with a couple angels, she spoke with a man she initially concluded was likely the garden’s caretaker. When the “gardener” spoke aloud her name, she immediately realized that he was, in fact, Jesus.

New Testament accounts of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus to his disciples make it clear that his disciples were not speaking of a psychological encounter they had with Jesus. Jesus’ resurrection was a bodily resurrection. The later writings and creeds (such as the Apostles’ Creed) of the early church, which make the same point repeatedly, speak not of a general resurrection of the dead (which could be equated with the Greek philosophical fascination with immortal souls or another form of spiritual resurrection) but of the resurrection of the body.

Jesus appeared with a body that could be seen. It could be touched. Even the empty tomb of Jesus, which no writer attempted to deny in the first couple of centuries of the church, suggests strongly that resurrection is much more than the revivification of the spirit; it includes the body.

**Matthew 5:11-12.** Unlike the preceding eight beatitudes, which pronounce a blessing on various types of persons (such as the poor in spirit, the merciful, or the pure in heart), this two-verse postscript is addressed to “you.” In historical context, “you” refers to those persons present and listening to Jesus’ sermon. In the context of Matthew’s Gospel, “you” refers to anyone reading the Gospel text. The postscript is similar in content and language to the final blessing in Luke 6:22 and its postscript in verse 23.

It is an almost universal experience that persons, from time to time, are treated poorly by others. Sometimes we are ridiculed or verbally accosted. Sometimes we are physically bullied

or badgered. On still other occasions, we may learn that others are slandering our good name or defaming our character. While it is natural to be saddened, upset, and even angered by such treatment, Jesus offers another perspective. When such ill treatment is “because of me”—because of our relationship with Jesus—we are actually being blessed.

Granted, harsh words and personal harassment are unlikely to make us feel happy (an indication that CEB’s “happy” must refer to something other than simple feelings of pleasure); yet, to the spiritually mature, they point to two deeper truths.

First, we are in good company. God’s prophets have consistently been mistreated because of their faithfulness to God. Second, the mistreatment we endure will be recompensed by “a great reward in heaven.” (See also 1 Peter 4:14.)

The apostle Paul made the same point when he noted bluntly that God’s people are liable to be harangued. Surprisingly, though, not only do we regularly survive such poor treatment (2 Corinthians 4:8-9; 16); we also begin to discern that it is but a passing trifle. Indeed, “our temporary minor problems are producing an eternal stockpile of glory for us that is beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17). We can be “full of joy.”

**John 20:1.** “Early in the morning” is a semi-technical reference to the time after cock-crow but before dawn, the three hours between 3-6 AM. Thus, it was “still dark.”

“The first day of the week” is Sunday. For “Mary Magdalene,” see Luke 8:2. The surname

is actually a geographical referent: Mary of [the town of] Magdala. She is the only person named in all four Gospel accounts of the discovery of Jesus’ empty tomb.

Although Joseph of Arimathea had been able to obtain permission from Pilate to bury Jesus’ body, which he and Nicodemus (who supplied the burial spices) then did, they likely were not able to complete their work due to the late hour (John 19:38-42). The Jewish sabbath begins at 6 PM on our Friday.

Perhaps Mary went to the tomb to complete the burial anointing of Jesus’ body; perhaps she went for the same reason we often go to a cemetery: to continue mourning her beloved near the body. Despite the darkness, as Mary approached the tomb, she could see that its stone covering was not in place. Matthew 28:2 says that angels removed it.

It is important to note that none of the Gospel accounts speak of anyone witnessing the Jesus’ resurrection as it actually happened. Rather, persons arrived at the tomb and discovered that it was empty. Then, later in the day, the resurrected Jesus began appearing to persons.

**Verse 2.** Mary immediately turned and ran back to the city, first to Peter, then to “the other disciple . . . whom Jesus loved” (presumably John). Although the text does not actually say that she looked inside the tomb, the displaced stone covering led her to believe that “they have taken the Lord,” but “we don’t know where.” The identity of “they” is not defined, but she likely was assuming some Jewish leaders were behind the act. “We” is not defined either, but based on the other Gospel accounts, probably



includes additional women (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1).

**Verse 3.** Peter and “the other disciple” (John) responded to Mary’s disturbing news by dropping whatever they were doing in order “to go to the tomb.”

**Verse 4.** Despite their different starting points, the two disciples ended up briefly “running together” before John pulled away from Peter (he was “faster”) and “was the first to arrive at the tomb.”

**Verse 5.** By this point in the morning, dawn was breaking. John did not enter the tomb, but he bent down and peered inside. He was not able to see a body, but he did see “the linen cloths [used to enshroud Jesus’ body] lying there.”

**Verses 6-7.** Soon, Peter arrived as well. Unlike John, he did not hesitate at the tomb’s entrance. Bounding inside, he not only “saw the linen cloths” but also “the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head.” Curiously, though, it “wasn’t with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place.”

Peter’s reaction to Jesus’ missing body is not recorded. However, the fact that the burial cloths were simply lying there undisturbed made it immediately clear that grave robbers had not broken into the tomb. Nor had Jewish officials (or anyone else) removed the body during the night to another location. Had either party done so, they would not have unwrapped the body before departing. And had they unwrapped the body, they would not have folded the cloths neatly and arranged them carefully on the stone shelf where Jesus’ body had lain.

John Chrysostom (347–407), an important early preacher and archbishop of Constantinople, drew attention to the fact that Jesus’ body had been enwrapped with myrrh and aloes (John 19:39-40). He pointed out that the spices would have “[glued the] linen to the body not less firmly than lead”;<sup>1</sup> they could not have been neatly removed, he concluded.

**Verse 8.** While Peter lingered in the tomb, unsure what to think of what he was seeing, John also stepped inside. Looking around at the empty shelf and the neatly folded burial cloths, the evidence convinced him, and he believed that Jesus had been resurrected.

**Verse 9.** That is not to say that either disciple grasped fully what had happened to Jesus. Indeed, neither understood “the Scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead.” John didn’t detail the Scripture text to which he was referring, but perhaps it was the messianic reference in Psalm 16:10: “You won’t abandon my life to the grave; you won’t let your faithful follower see the pit.” By Pentecost morning, however, the connection had been made and was being proclaimed by Jesus’ followers (Acts 2:31).

In making this link between Scripture text and historical event, it is important to recognize that Jesus’ disciples (and, later, the New Testament authors) did not first select Old Testament verses and then fancifully reconstruct historical events so they would correspond closely to the text. Rather, starting with the historical events of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, they scoured the pages of the Old Testament, looking for verses that seemed to anticipate

what actually took place. The Christian faith is grounded firmly on God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ.

**Verse 10.** Perplexed, filled with questions about the disappearance of Jesus' body, Peter and John soon realized that there was nothing more they could do at the garden tomb, so they "returned to the place where they were staying."

**Verse 11.** Having apparently come back to Jesus' empty tomb when Peter and the other disciple had first made their way there to investigate her declaration that Jesus' tomb lay open (verses 1-3), Mary Magdalene stayed behind when the two men departed. She was "crying"; that is, she was bewailing the death of one she loved (Luke 8:52; John 11:33). Eventually, she did as Peter and the other disciple had done; she "bent down to look into the tomb" (verses 5-6.).

**Verse 12.** When Mary did so, she "saw two angels." John didn't say whether she grasped at that moment that they were angels; given their conversation in verse 13, one would assume not. He mentioned only that she noted they were "seated where the body of Jesus had been." One writer suggests that the angels "function . . . to make it plain that an otherwise wholly terrestrial happening is really a divine action."<sup>2</sup>

**Verse 13.** The two angels initiated a conversation with Mary, asking her, "Why are you crying?" The question was an invitation to Mary to talk about her sorrow, not an indication that the angels were daft. Her response was to the point, mostly repeating what she had earlier reported to "Peter and the other disciple" (verse 2): "They [unknown persons] have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've

put him." There are, however, two differences. "The Lord" now becomes "my Lord" and "we" becomes "I." Presumably she was still wanting to complete the preparation of Jesus' body for burial (Luke 24:1).

**Verse 14.** Just then, Mary may have noticed the angels' eyes looking beyond her. Or perhaps she heard some rustling or a footstep behind her. Whatever the cause, she turned "and saw Jesus standing there." But her quick glance only told her that another person was now standing behind her; indeed, she had no reason to expect the person to be Jesus, since she had been present at the cross less than 48 hours previously (John 19:25) and had watched as Jesus' dead body was placed in its tomb (Luke 23:55).

**Verse 15.** As the angels had done previously, Jesus asked Mary why she was crying. Was she, perhaps, looking for someone? His comment led Mary, who still wasn't paying him much attention, to assume he was likely the "gardener." The thought then occurred to her that he may have (for reasons she did not know) temporarily moved Jesus' body elsewhere. Thus, she responded, "If you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him" (in order to give him a proper burial).

**Verse 16.** When Jesus then called Mary by name, she instantly recognized him (John 10:3, 4, 16), her grief transformed instantly into indescribable joy. For another instance involving the delayed recognition of the resurrected Jesus by his disciples, see Luke 24:13-35, especially verses 31, 35.

**Verse 17.** In her joy, Mary must have embraced Jesus, which led him to tell her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father.” Mary can certainly be excused for thinking that Jesus’ presence meant that she and the other disciples would be able to resume their existing relationships with Jesus.

Jesus’ words kindly but firmly made it clear that resurrection to new life is not the same thing as resuscitation to one’s former life (as in the case of Lazarus [John 11:38-44]). Rather than cling to the relationship as it had once been, Jesus was inviting her to be open to all that his new life portended. He then instructed Mary to tell his other disciples that he had, indeed, been resurrected.

**Verse 18.** Filled with joy, Mary immediately did as Jesus directed. She left the garden tomb and went back into the city to tell the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” One can easily imagine that her simple statement raised many questions and generated a host of comments. Yet she did her best to tell the disciples all that Jesus had “said to her.”

## Reflect

### *Ahead of Time*

If you have the *Adult Bible Studies* DVD, preview the segment for this lesson, and arrange to show it during class.

Carefully read the corresponding lesson in the student book, and highlight statements and questions you can use during your class discussion.

### *During Class*

Begin class with prayer. Consider using the following: *Almighty God, for 2,000 years, your church has faithfully borne witness to the fact that “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”<sup>3</sup> Refill our hearts this day with the blessed joy that all creation experiences because of Jesus’ resurrection. And may we ever live forth its life-bestowing truth; in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

If you have the *Adult Bible Studies* DVD, show the segment related to this lesson.

Explain that in this final lesson of Unit 1, we’ll see how Jesus’ resurrection illustrates the blessing experienced by those who are insulted, harassed, and slandered in life.

Ask a class member to read aloud the Purpose Statement for this lesson. Invite another class member to read aloud Matthew 5:11-12.

Explain that these verses are not actually a beatitude; they are a kind of postscript that encompasses the scope and meaning of the preceding eight beatitudes.

Ask: *What is your honest, gut reaction to these two verses?* Many, if not all, class members will likely admit that the verses do not especially excite them. *Might your reaction to these verses be different if insult, slander, and religious persecution because of your commitment to Jesus were your daily experience?*

Say: *Think about Jesus’ life, especially the harassment he endured during the last week of his life.* Ask: *Insofar as you have endured*



*insults and badgering because of your faith in Jesus, how might Jesus' resurrection hold out blessing and hope to you?*

Invite a class member with a Bible to read aloud 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Explain that Paul's autobiographical words are true also of Jesus and of Christians today who suffer because of their faith in Jesus. Then invite the same class member to read aloud 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. Explain that these words offer a helpful way to understand Matthew 5:11-12.

Invite a class member with a Bible to read aloud John 20:1-10. Say: *Imagine that you are Mary Magdalene and you have just noticed that the stone covering to Jesus' grave has been removed. What would you think? What would you do?*

After one or two responses, invite a class member to reread John 20:2. Say: *Continue imagining that you are Mary. Ask: When Peter and John begin running toward the garden in which Jesus was buried, what do you do? Why?*

Say: *In light of the 2,000-year history of the Christian faith, it is easy to marvel at Peter's inability to conclude that Jesus had been resurrected. But we can sympathize with him. You and I have stood too many times in cemeteries beside open graves in which our friends and loved ones have been lowered into the ground.*

Ask: *If you were to return to a cemetery a couple of days after the burial of your beloved*

*and discovered the grave was open and the casket or urn was empty, would "resurrection" be your first thought?* If a class member says yes, be respectful, and acknowledge that does seem to have been John's response (verse 8), but add that Peter apparently wasn't able to form that conclusion.

Say: *As wonderful as it was that God resurrected Jesus, that incredible fact doesn't seem to have made much of an impression on Peter and John. They just went home. That God chose to reveal to Mary and to Jesus' other followers what he had done to Jesus is what causes Jesus' resurrection to fill us (and all believers) with great joy.*

Invite a class member to read aloud John 20:11-18. Say: *Whether Mary returned to Jesus' tomb at the same time as Peter and John or sometime after they made their way home is unclear. But, as the student book writer put it, as these verses begin, she was now "back at the tomb."*

Ask: *Why do you think Mary returned a second time to Jesus' tomb even though she knew his body was not there?* If no one mentions this reason, point out that the student book writer suggested that "she was [continuing] to seek out Jesus."

Ask the questions at the end of "Mary's Encounter," and invite class members to respond. Say: *One more time, imagine that you are Mary. You've returned to Jesus' tomb. You're all alone. When you finally look inside the*

*sepulcher, you see two persons/angels. Then, suddenly, another man is standing immediately behind you.*

Ask: *Would you have gotten spooked and run away in fear; or, like Mary, would you have engaged the various persons in conversation about Jesus?*

*Has there been a time in your life when, looking back on the occasion, you feel relatively certain that you had an encounter with Jesus or an angel (but didn't recognize that fact at the time)?*

Ask the questions at the end of “Jesus on the Move,” and invite class members to respond.

Say: Let's go back for a moment to the fact that Mary did not, at first, recognize Jesus. She was not alone in this. The student book writer reminds us that, later on that first Easter, two of Jesus' followers on the Emmaus Road also failed to recognize him (Luke 24:16).

Ask: *Why do you suppose Mary failed to recognize Jesus? (Scripture offers no answer; however, Luke notes that the followers on the Emmaus Road “were prevented from recognizing him.” In his reflections on what “resurrection bodies” look like, Paul suggested that they are quite different from “creation*

*bodies” [1 Corinthians 15:35-49]. The Walk to Emmaus movement draws an analogy to the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.)*

Ask: *Who has been, for you, the presence of Jesus? How might Jesus' experience of resurrection life offer you another way to understand the blessing God pronounces on those who are insulted, persecuted, and slandered?*

Note that this is the final lesson of Unit 1, in which Gospel stories have been paired with Jesus' beatitudes to help make better sense of the blessings. Unit 2 offers five lessons involving images of water from the Gospel of John.

Conclude class by asking class members to pray aloud with you the prayer at the end of the lesson in the student book: **Risen Lord Jesus, come to us on this Easter Sunday. Fill us with your joy but also with a sense of your real presence. Help us to recognize you wherever you are. And give us encouragement to remember that you want to be recognized! In your name we pray. Amen.**

<sup>1</sup>From *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Volume XIV, edited by Philip Schaff (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978); page 321.

<sup>2</sup>From *Saint John*, by John Marsh (Penguin Books, 1968); page 635.

<sup>3</sup>The Paschal Troparion is sung at the end of the Easter Vigil in the Orthodox Church. ([tinyurl.com/2cszj9p2](http://tinyurl.com/2cszj9p2)).

## Unit 2: Living Water

The five lessons that comprise the second unit address the recurring theme of water in the Gospel of John. It is life-giving. Whether water is on Jesus' hands, his lips, or beneath his feet, Jesus is clearly its master. It does as Jesus commands it to do; it becomes what Jesus intends it to be. It conveys life, offers healing, refreshes spirits, and extends forgiveness.

In Lesson 9 (John 4:4-14), a tired and thirsty Jesus engages in a surprising conversation about water with a Samaritan woman who approaches the historic site of Jacob's well. Initially irritated that a Jewish man was asking her for aid, she became intrigued when he spoke of living water. As the conversation morphed into a spiritual discussion that not only revealed unhealed wounds in her life but also promised an unexpected cure, she eventually received a life-changing gift from "the savior of the world" (John 4:42).

In Lesson 10 (John 5:1-15), while attending one of the Jewish festivals, Jesus was moved with compassion one sabbath as he walked past a large crowd of physically disabled persons huddled around a pool of water with supposed restorative powers. His eyes fell on a man who was clearly an invalid. Jesus approached him, pronounced him cured, and told him he could take himself and his mat home. The sabbath healing, though accomplished by divine compassion, sparked a religious controversy with Jewish officials that eventually cost Jesus his life.

In Lesson 11 (John 6:16-25), following his miraculous feeding of the 5,000, Jesus spent an evening in prayer while his disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee. When a fierce storm kept the disciples from reaching their intended destination, Jesus decided to join them where they were rather than go on ahead of them. Not surprisingly, his miraculous act of walking on the water terrified the disciples until they heard his comforting voice tell them, "It's me; don't be afraid."

In Lesson 12 (John 7:37-46), Jesus is back in Jerusalem in the Temple courtyard, this time for the Feast of Tabernacles. On the final day, apparently just as a concluding liturgical act involving water was being pronounced, Jesus stood to his feet and loudly announced that if his hearers would believe in him, they would discover "rivers of living water" within them. Whatever in their spirit was dry or parched would be refreshed by the Spirit Jesus offered them.

In Lesson 13 (John 13:1-11), less than 24 hours before he would be dead, Jesus performed one last life-giving act of compassion. In the midst of a shared meal, Jesus got up from the table and began washing the feet of each of his disciples. Like so many things that he did, the act could be interpreted at multiple levels. Yes, it was a moving example of humility to be imitated; but it also pointed to a spiritual act of cleansing to be received.