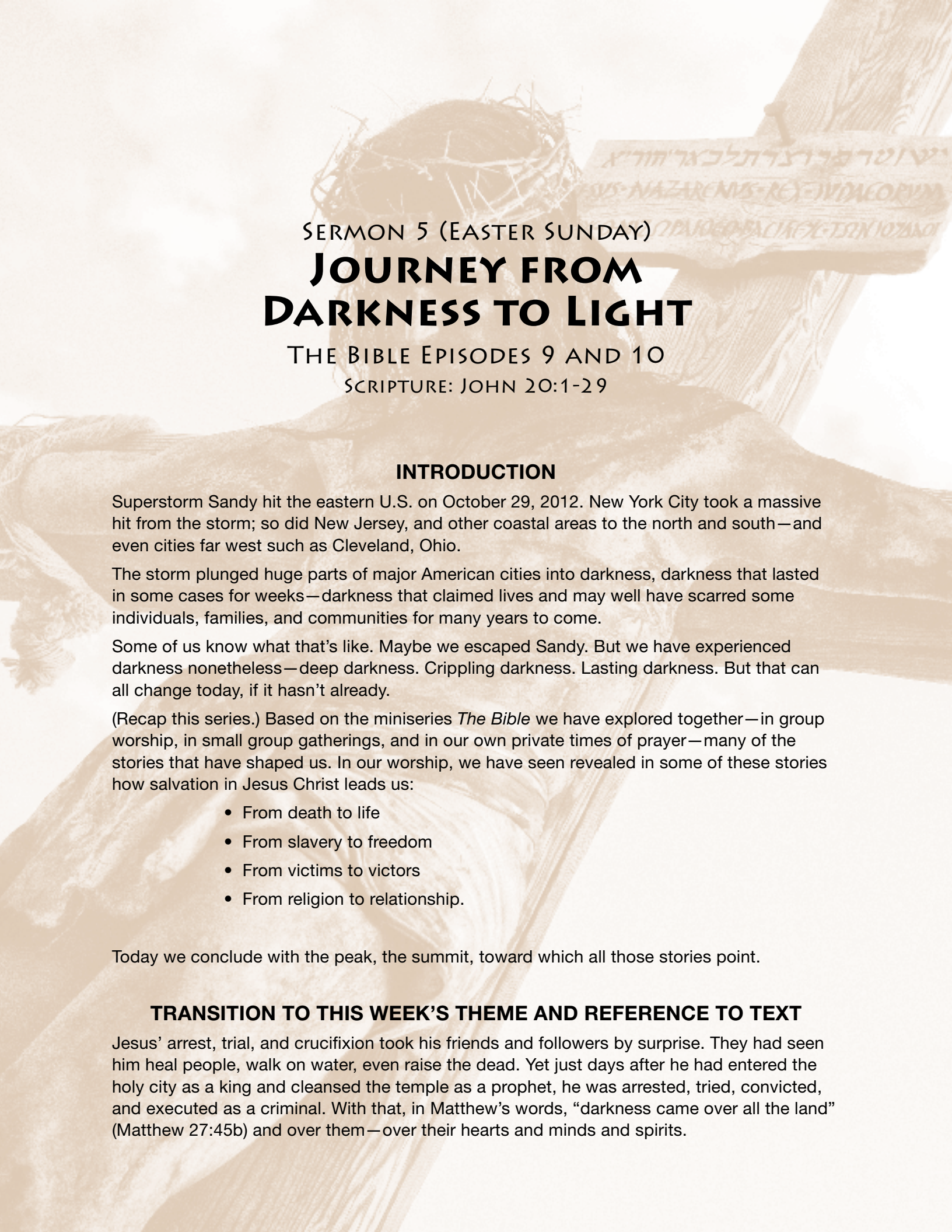




SERMON 5 (EASTER SUNDAY)
**JOURNEY FROM
DARKNESS TO LIGHT**

THE BIBLE EPISODES 9 AND 10

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:1-29



SERMON 5 (EASTER SUNDAY)

JOURNEY FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

THE BIBLE EPISODES 9 AND 10

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:1-29

INTRODUCTION

Superstorm Sandy hit the eastern U.S. on October 29, 2012. New York City took a massive hit from the storm; so did New Jersey, and other coastal areas to the north and south—and even cities far west such as Cleveland, Ohio.

The storm plunged huge parts of major American cities into darkness, darkness that lasted in some cases for weeks—darkness that claimed lives and may well have scarred some individuals, families, and communities for many years to come.

Some of us know what that's like. Maybe we escaped Sandy. But we have experienced darkness nonetheless—deep darkness. Crippling darkness. Lasting darkness. But that can all change today, if it hasn't already.

(Recap this series.) Based on the miniseries *The Bible* we have explored together—in group worship, in small group gatherings, and in our own private times of prayer—many of the stories that have shaped us. In our worship, we have seen revealed in some of these stories how salvation in Jesus Christ leads us:

- From death to life
- From slavery to freedom
- From victims to victors
- From religion to relationship.

Today we conclude with the peak, the summit, toward which all those stories point.

TRANSITION TO THIS WEEK'S THEME AND REFERENCE TO TEXT

Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion took his friends and followers by surprise. They had seen him heal people, walk on water, even raise the dead. Yet just days after he had entered the holy city as a king and cleansed the temple as a prophet, he was arrested, tried, convicted, and executed as a criminal. With that, in Matthew's words, "darkness came over all the land" (Matthew 27:45b) and over them—over their hearts and minds and spirits.

Maybe you have felt that way, too. You might even feel that way today, or you might know someone who does. If that is the case, I want you to know there is hope. As this clip from The Bible miniseries depicts:

Those few moments summarize a scene found in the Gospel of John. We're going to explore it together, along with two other scenes that follow, to see three aspects of this "great salvation" we've been exploring in this series in the light of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The first aspect, or facet, of salvation is this:

1. I am saved from the darkness of confusion and given a new commission.

- a. (Read John 20:1, 14–18.)
- b. That first Easter was a confusing morning for Mary. First, she had to be grief-stricken. Then she finds the tomb empty. Then (in vv. 10–13) she meets two angels but may not have realized they were angels! Then she sees Jesus, but at first doesn't recognize him! She thinks he's the gardener!
- c. But Jesus calls her by name, and her confusion disappears into excitement and joy. And then she is given a commission. She becomes the first evangelist of the resurrection in Christian history.
- d. So it is with me and with you. We may be confused about many things, but if you have invited the risen Christ into your heart and life, many things become clear (give a few examples here).
- e. And, like Mary, the soul that has trusted Christ is given the same commission: to spread the news of the risen Christ.

2. I am saved from the darkness of fear and given a new peace and presence.

- a. (Read John 20:19–23.)
- b. Why were the disciples behind locked doors? (v. 19: "for fear.")
 - i. Peter, who walked on water: "for fear"
 - ii. James, one of the "sons of thunder": "for fear"
 - iii. John, who stayed by the cross to the bitter end: "for fear"
- c. But Jesus greets them—(v. 19) "Peace be with you"—and then breathed new life into them. He banished their fear with his peace and the constant presence of the Spirit.
- d. So it is with me and with you. Are you afraid today? Of what? (Give a few possibilities here.) You don't have to be. The peace and presence of Jesus in your heart banishes fear.