

Matthew 27:62-28:15

The resurrection of Jesus Christ. How can we describe it? Is it the best and most surprising ending to a narrative ever? A winning lottery ticket? An x-ray that comes back negative? A victory proclamation in war? A new baby? the dawning of the sun after the dark of night?

As we come to our text this morning, Matthew 28, documents for us the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This morning we are going to do three things, 1. Receive the news of the resurrection, 2. Reflect on the resurrection, 3. Respond to the resurrection.

1. RECEIVE THE NEWS OF THE RESURRECTION

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ 64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

What we see here is the continuing display of hatred of Jesus and fear over who He is and what might happen because of Him. The chief priests and pharisees, still united in their opposition to Jesus, want to do all they can to prevent this movement from going any further. But they need Roman approval to put out guards, so they go to Pilate. Their argument is that his first fraud was that He claimed to be the Messiah King, His second fraud will be that He rose from the dead. This would cause more trouble, so you need to put it out.

“From their perspective, they are trying to protect the people from deception, but from Matthew’s perspective, they are deceiving themselves.” -Carson

Pilate tells them they can use the temple police. Matthew makes explicit here the degree of human effort to try to stop this thing. “Go, make it as secure as you can.” This often involved a grave entrance that slanted down in the rock, so that a boulder could be rolled in its place, easy to wedge into place, difficult to remove. So things are secure, so they think. The story continues...

28:1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”

So both these Mary’s head to see the tomb. An earthquake takes place, the ground is shaking, and an angel of the Lord, shining in glory comes down. This huge rock gets rolled back and the angel sits on it. The guards freak out and become like dead men.

You can imagine the Mary’s fears at this point. The angel addresses the Mary’s and calms their fears. Don’t be afraid. Jesus has risen from the dead. They give a verbal proclamation of the fact, then ask them to investigate themselves, “come see the place where he lay.” Matthew’s working in this theme of observation, from them going to see the tomb, to here come see the place where he lay.

“There is no implication that the earthquake had anything to do with releasing Jesus: the stone was rolled back, the seal broken, and the soldiers made helpless, not to let the risen Messiah escape, but to let the first witnesses in.” -Carson

They were to witness the resurrection and then go tell... Go quickly and tell His disciples.

8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

What an unbelievable moment this is! Can you imagine the emotions going through them? Talk about having your world wrecked. We saw Him scourged. We saw Him crucified. We thought the whole thing was over. We've been deeply grieving and weeping. An angel shows up and tells us He's alive! And they are running away to tell the others about what happened, and Jesus shows up... greetings!

They fall down and worship him, grabbing his feet. Jesus calms their fears, do not be afraid, and gives them a similar command, go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee.

the way the gospels record to us the resurrection, are not by satisfying exactly how it happened, but by showing us the effects, 1. in the empty tomb, and 2. in the physical appearance to the disciples.

And now the story jumps back to soldiers.

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers 13 and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ 14 And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

All this glory and goodness and celebration is happening out there, and here in the middle of Jerusalem the guards and the chief priests, and a council of elders, are seeing how hard they can rain on the party. So they engage in the best cover up they can come up with, using money to force the soldiers to spread a lie about why Jesus body is gone. The disciples came and stole it. The soldiers were risking their lives with it, but the money was worth it to them.

2. REFLECT ON THE RESURRECTION (What does the resurrection accomplish?)

1. Vindicates Jesus as the Son of God

Jesus said and did bunch of things that pointed to Him as God. He was born of a virgin. He taught with supernatural authority. He healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, performed a number of miracles showing His authority over creation. He made claims about rising from the dead (John 10). All this pointing to the fact that what Jesus said and did testified that He was God. This is what He was on trial for, why they wanted Him killed. It was a false accusation. But for all they thought, they thought they were right. And no one was putting together God on a cross. The resurrection is the stamp that says everyone got it wrong. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree... but this is the blessed One. It vindicates who Jesus is and it vindicates His righteousness. Not guilty as charged. Jesus is supreme. He has absolute authority over all things, and defeated death, sin and Satan. Jesus is exactly who He says He is.

2. *Makes forgiveness possible*

Paul in 1 cor 15:17 says that we would still be in our sins if Jesus did not come out of the grave. The resurrection proves the offering for sin was sufficient. It makes Jesus sacrifice more than a martyr for a cause. The check didn't bounce, it went through to the bank.

Romans 4:23 But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

3. *Establishes Jesus as the eternal mediator between God and man (grace)*

Jesus resurrection changes how we relate to God. Matthew emphasizes galilee in his gospel, not jerusalem, the religious center that rejected, him, but the gentiles, the outcasts, the nobodys, those in darkness, to them light has dawned. Ushers in a whole new way of understanding that centers on His grace given to us. God does for us what we cannot do ourselves. We cannot meet with God directly, but Jesus can, and so we have access to God through Jesus. If Jesus did not raised than we would have no mediator. The temple would still be around. Jesus said One greater than the temple was here, that's why. No need for a temple when you have Jesus. No need for a sacrifice when you have the sacrifice of Jesus. No need to go through a priest or anyone else when you have Jesus. The resurrection declares that salvation is by grace through faith alone, no other way. And we continue to relate to God through the mediation of Jesus. We get God for eternity.

4. *Creates a new righteous humanity*

Jesus coming out of the grave ushers in a new humanity. It's not just that we are forgiven and justified, we are made righteous. Without the change, we'd keep sinning. All died in Adam. All live in Christ that believe in Him. He is the firstfruits of what's to come, 1 Cor. 15. Literally the first part of the crop that will come later. He brings light and immortality to life, 2 tim. Without the resurrection of Christ, there would be no new humanity. But we will be made new. New bodies, new hearts, new minds, that love God with everything we are. We will be made like Christ. This power can be stepped into now to a certain extent. But it is coming in its fullness when the Kingdom comes. Unity, blood makes one out of two. We become a family. Jesus says in v.10, go tell my brothers. The ones that just denied and left Him, He calls, not just servants or disciples, but brothers. Jesus is our elder brother. Restored into the image of the Son, into the image of God.

5. *Makes way for a new heavens and new earth*

When Adam and Eve sinned, a curse was put on the earth. That curse of suffering and pain and hardship, and all types of physical evils, from hurricanes and floods to cancer and genetic mutations, all was a response to sin. The physical realm displaying the horrors of the spiritual reality of sin. In Christ's resurrection He takes care of sin, makes us righteous, so then initiates a new place for us to live, that would be full of the glory of God, His image in us and His image in the world. Romans says, the creation groans, and we ourselves, groan, as we wait eagerly for this day. Having the firstfruits of God in our hearts by His Spirit, we groan that all of life will be brought into the perfect and joyful freedom of God's reign. We have an inheritance with the Son. The Son will be given a land to enjoy and rule, and His inheritance becomes our own.

Revelation passage there will be no tears, suffering, death, the cosmos will be rightly ordered under His Lordship.

3. RESPOND TO THE RESURRECTION

1. Believe in the resurrection

Our primary response is to believe. The gospel is not asking us primarily to perform a bunch of actions, change our behavior, and start attending a church. The gospel calls us to believe something. Gospel means good news. It is something to hear and believe. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead then you will be saved.

Well, maybe you hear all this, but simply don't believe He was resurrected. Maybe you think this is all one big crutch that the Christians have made up to help them feel better about themselves and this world. God's not scared with your doubts and questions. He wants you to come to Him. If you come seeking Him, He will show Himself to you. "If you seek me you will find me, says the Lord." Here in our text, the angels say to these ladies, "Come, see the place where he lay." There's an invitation to observation. Come and study, think through the data points and see that Christ is alive. Ultimately it's a matter of faith and trust, but there's some helpful ways we can work through it if you struggle with doubts. There's 4 basic arguments that are put forward. We will just touch on each briefly...

1. Jesus didn't die on the cross

Instead, it was a lookalike. This is what many Muslims believe. There was a switcharoo that at some point took place, and a lookalike Jesus was inserted in His place. Very hard to imagine if you also believe the hostility of the crowds, religious leaders, political leaders, as well as the professionalism of the soldiers. Also denies any teaching of Jesus about His clearly stated mission to die and the need for paying a penalty for sin.

The other option is that Jesus was hung on the cross but didn't actually die. He became unconscious and they thought He was dead. And somehow, with his flesh ripped off His body, holes in his hands and feet, He wakes up in a tomb, pushes a large rock out of the way, and quietly sneaks past a group of soldiers.

2. Jesus was in a different tomb

Everyone got the tomb wrong. Both of these Mary's were there watching Jesus laid in the tomb, and they were the ones coming later, they would not both make such a bad mistake. But the real problem is that this is exactly what all the soldiers and leaders were trying to avoid. The ones in power wanted the body to be seen. Again, you would have professional soldiers making a ridiculous mistake. And to shut down the commotion, someone would have found the correct tomb and presented the body.

3. Jesus' body was stolen by His disciples

Untrained disciples could never pull such a thing over skilled professional Roman soldiers. And it makes no sense for the disciples to even imagine the plan, or that the plan would do anything. Resurrection wasn't a category that they had, and doing so would only get them killed, it wouldn't give them an advantage. No one in their right mind lies to get themselves killed.

4. Jesus' disciples were delusional or hallucinating when they saw Him

There was no actual presence, but they thought He was there, maybe to cope or carry on the teaching. What crushes this line of argument is the fact that the disciples overnight experience a transformation in behavior as well as are blessed with incredible influence.

How can you explain this ragtag, timid, cowardly crew of fisherman, ashamed of Jesus during the trial, tucking their tails, and then all of a sudden these guys are bold as lions, staring persecution in the face, joyfully and

willingly dying for the cause of Christ. Their influence became remarkable. Secular scholars agree that around 2,000 years ago this new religious movement we call Christianity explodes on the scene overnight with incredible potency and power. The only option that truly makes sense is that Jesus actually died on the cross and physically rose from the dead just like the Bible tells us.

2. Worship Jesus as Lord and Savior

Jesus is worthy of all that you are and all that you have. He's worthy. Supreme. No one else like Him. Eternal. He deserves your worship. When you don't worship Him, you mock Him. To not stand up when someone comes in the room, mocks them. Displays they don't have enough worth to get up. Worship of Jesus is demanded of us because of the type of person He is... He's Lord. Ruler of all. King of Kings. And we see His saving attributes in perfect display, His love, His humility, His sacrifice. That deserves worship. Full worship. Not half hearted, do it because it's the right thing to do, worship. Response like when you view the grand canyon for the first time... you don't think about how to respond, you respond. Woah!

But then that objective worth of Jesus needs to also land into your personal experience...

3. Rejoice in the gift of God

Christ is alive for you! His Lordship and His Saving work has been done for you. He's objectively worth your worship whether you receive one ounce of blessing or not from Him. But the beauty of the gospel is that you receive all of Him for you. He live the life you could never live, died the death you deserve, and rose to new life to give you new and eternal life and righteousness forever. Hallelujah! We who once deserved death, now get life! as a gift! We didn't earn it, we weren't looking for it, we weren't desiring it, but He came and rescued and redeemed us.

The resurrection declares that your sin or your situation, no matter how tragic or difficult or sad, does not have the final word. Gives hope in the midst of greatest difficulty, there is light in the darkness.

Rejoice! Be full of joy! Jesus is your eternal pleasure that cannot be taken.

4. Repent of sin

In our rejoicing in our Lord and Savior, we must also submit to our Lord and Savior. It's not enough to confess without turning from our sin. When we don't turn from our sin, we show who is really still the allegiance in our lives. When we fail to click off the web browser we have no business looking at? when we can't put down the addiction? When we live for people to see our good works? When we think our good actions will outweigh our bad ones? We are showing our allegiance belongs somewhere other than Christ.

That's not conversion. The bible does not say we are perfect once converted, it says we will continue to struggle, but it does give us some markers to see if genuine conversion has taken place. There must be a surrender to Jesus as Lord of your life, and a turning from running your own life.

The appropriate response to seeing Christ resurrected, is not to go on sinning! It's to walk out the righteousness that He has granted you on the basis of His grace and mercy. It's gratitude for grace that fuels life transformation and holiness. We are to walk in the newness of life that Christ has given us. His power is in us!

5. Labor for the Lord

Worshiping Jesus, Rejoicing in Him, Repenting of Sin, we are now ready to work for Him. Who doesn't want to work for the King of Kings! Labor in the King's work is an unbelievable and natural response to His character

and His work on our behalf. The resurrection supplies us with power, the same power that raised Christ dwells in us, Ephesians 1, and we have rock solid confidence and hope because Jesus reigns as the sovereign Lord. That propels us into labor!

1 Cor. , in the Lord your labor is never in vain. Wow! Never wasted. Never lost. You say a prayer, you share the gospel, you become a friend to someone, let someone have a parking spot, spend any amount of energy, its never wasted if its done for the King of Kings. Why? Because He puts it to use. He can do that as God.

Our labor primary lands in two directions

edification of the body

Building up the body of Christ. Are you giving yourself to Harvest Church? Or are you on the sidelines. Paul was in anguish that the Corinthians weren't conformed into Christ, and that led to labor. How much do care about your small group? Do you show up? It might take some labor. Small group is hard. It's labor. Show up. Be there to bless someone. Call, text, have coffee, serve them, pray for them. Are you laboring for the body of Christ?

We we are not about is autopiloting this thing called church. That's not what Christ has intended. We are to be growing, that happens when every member is engaging and using their gifts and abilities to love and serve the body. Consumerism of the church is at complete odds with a resurrected Christ. The resurrected Christ fills us with power, and compels us into community, where we bring His new life to bear.

saving of the lost

The resurrection also compels us outward. The resurrection means the gospel is for everyone, and there is no heart too hard to be broken by His power. We will study His great commission more fully next week, but there is an unbreakable link between the resurrection of Christ and the commission of Christ. All authority has been given to me, go therefore, and make disciples of all nations.

We go because Christ has risen. It's a message worth giving our lives to. The disciples didn't become bold because they read the latest self-help book and listened to the latest productivity podcast... the gospel blew open because Jesus came out of the grave. If we fail to have an impulse to the lost, than we are not responding rightly to the resurrection. We might have different strengths in evangelism, but we are all called to be a light to the world.

Here's the deal, as we are thinking about our influence to the body of Christ or to the lost, each of our lives is telling a story. We can't help but be story tellers, telling a narrative about what's most important, about where life is going, about what's glorious or pleasurable or hope giving. And here's the question, is your life testifying to the story of a risen and reigning Christ? Or does your life testify that, at least functionally, He's still in the ground?