Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Part 1
Scripture: Matthew 28:1-7
Code: 2401

Today in our study of God's Word we come to Matthew's text on the resurrection. I'll ask you to open your Bible to the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. We're going to be looking this Lord's day and next at the first ten verses of this great chapter in which Matthew gives His look at the greatest event in the history of the world, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

This is the great cornerstone of the Christian faith. Everything that we are and have and ever hope to be, all that we believe in is predicated on the reality of the resurrection. There would be no Christianity if there were no resurrection. Conversely because there is a resurrection, all elements of our faith are affirmed as true in every sense. The resurrection then is the cornerstone of our faith.

The world knows that, for the most part, if they know anything about Christianity or anything about Christian history or heritage. There's little question in our own culture that we believe that Jesus rose from the dead. But there are many possible reactions to the resurrection. Let me suggest some of them to you.

First of all, there is the reaction of rationalism. Rationalism says that the resurrection must be rejected on the basis that it cannot fit into human reason. This is a humanistic view that says because the mind of mind is ultimate, only that which man can perceive and explain can therefore be true and since the resurrection is inexplicable by human reason, it did not happen. And so rationalism rejects the resurrection as it rejects all other miraculous elements of redemptive history.

A second reaction and similar is the reaction of unbelief. Unbelief doesn't reason away the reality of the resurrection, it just refuses to believe the plain truth. Simple unbelief is a denial of what is a fact for the fact of the resurrection is perhaps the most indisputable fact of all of ancient history, based on evidences and testimony from eye witnesses. But unbelief denies the facts.

Then there is the reaction of doubt. That's to question the resurrection. There may be such a thing as honest doubt, a true seeker wanting to have questions about the resurrection resolved. And then there is hypocritical doubt which simply continues to question long after available evidence is made clear. But there are those who doubt the resurrection, whether genuinely or hypocritically.

Another possible response is the response of indifference. That is the response that says it may be true or in fact it is true but I just don't care. It makes no claim on my life, it's not something on my

agenda, I don't see it at the top of my priority list whether it happened or not, I'm not particularly interested.

Then I suppose we could say there is the response of ignorance. There are those people who are just not familiar with the facts of the resurrection. They may not even know about it and if they do it may be a rather whimsical passing vague thing for which they have no real attestation and so they are in ignorance.

And admittedly there is also the reaction of outright hostility. There are people who are just hostile to the resurrection. It is more than a rationalistic rejection based upon the supremacy of human reason. It is more than just a willful unbelief of the facts. It is more than doubt and more than indifference and more than ignorance, it is anger. It is hostility. It is a vocal vociferous effort to discredit the resurrection. And there are those people who have felt it was their place in life and role in history to write against the resurrection.

And sadly, all of these are wrong reactions and wrong responses and unnecessary. The proper response is the response of faith, of belief, of affirmation and application of the reality of the resurrection to the life of the one who is exposed to its truth.

Now as we come to the gospels, we confess at the very start that we're going to be dealing with the response of faith...for Matthew, and Mark and Luke and John all believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ not because they were against their wills forced to believe, but because they who were close to the reality of it were overwhelmed with its evidence...as were all the other people who were a part of the believing community who identified with Jesus Christ.

So, as we come to Matthew's account in chapter 28 verses 1 to 10, we're going to join those who see the resurrection through the eyes of faith. Later on in this chapter we'll hear from the rejectors, but it opens with those who believe. As we come to this chapter, do I need to say to you that this is the end of a long study of this marvelous gospel of many years? And some of us, as we come to chapter 28, have arrived at something we thought the Rapture would preempt, but it hasn't. And maybe for some of us there might be the temptation to say at last we're going to get it over. But you can't look at it that way. Chapter 28 doesn't just get it over, chapter 28 climaxes it.

Some people are under the illusion, you know, that the Bible is just a whole lot of spiritual truths that are put together at random. That's not true. Every book in the Bible starts somewhere and ends somewhere. And as you come to the end as anybody who knows anything about literature knows, any writer worth his salt is going to go somewhere and he's going to get there at the end so that the end becomes climactic and exciting and thrilling and confirming and affirming to all that has been said before. So what we see in chapter 28 is not just the end of a long study, it's the climax of everything. It is the point of everything and the purpose of everything. This then is not a time to diminish our

attention. This is a time then to call on all of our memory of everything we have to this point learned and pour it into our minds that we may understand the fullness of meaning that bursts on us in chapter 28. And we come to the glory of the resurrection...this greatest of all events.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon wrote, "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, I risk my whole eternity and the resurrection is the why." I mean, this is it. The first sermon ever preached in the church the day the church was born was preached by Peter in Acts 2 and it's a sermon on the resurrection. As a result of that and the reality of the resurrection became the theme of all apostolic preaching. Peter preached again on the resurrection in chapter 4 and again on the resurrection in chapter 10. And Stephen preached the resurrection in chapter 7. And Philip preached the resurrection in chapter 8. And Paul preached the resurrection in chapter 9 and chapter 13 and all the way on to chapter 28 of Acts.

And then we come to the epistles and the theme of the epistles is the resurrection. In Romans it says Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. And in 1 Corinthians it says He rose again the third day according to the Scripture. And in 2 Corinthians, He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also. And Galatians says by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead. And we read in Ephesians which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. And Paul says in Philippians that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. And in Colossians, God who raised Him from the dead. And in 1 Thessalonians, His Son who He raised from the dead. And Peter says that He has in chapter 1 verse 3 begotten us to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ. And even when you come to the book of Revelation it begins by saying that Christ has the right to take the earth because it is He who was dead and is alive forever more.

The whole theme of the New Testament is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we are there as we open this chapter. Not only are we there but we are here because of the resurrection. This is Sunday...this is the first day of the week...this is resurrection day. Spurgeon also wrote so wonderfully of the meaning of the Lord's day in these words, "We gather together on the first rather than the seventh day of the week because redemption is even a greater work than creation and more worthy of commemoration and because the rest which followed creation is far outdone by the rest which ensues upon the completion of redemption. Like the Apostles, we meet on the first day of the week and hope that Jesus may stand in our midst and say, `Peace be unto you.' Our Lord has lifted the Sabbath from the old and rusty hinges where on the law had placed it long before and set it on the new golden hinges which His love has fashioned. He has placed our rest day not at the end of a week of toil but at the beginning of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Every first day of the week we should meditate on the rising of our Lord and seek to enter into the fellowship with Him in His risen life," end quote.

Here is the foundation of all our hope. For it was Jesus who said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It was Jesus who said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me though

he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The resurrection is the core of all we believe. And so we come with great excitement then to this record of our Lord's resurrection.

Now let me note for you that each of the four gospel writers presents the resurrection and each of them presents it in a unique way, picking out certain elements of the event of the resurrection to enforce certain spiritual truth from the mind of the Spirit to the heart of the reader. And as we go through Matthew's picture of the resurrection, we're going to draw from Mark and Luke and John in order to enrich and fill out the wholeness of the scene that we may appreciate all of its great truth.

Matthew approaches it so interestingly. He approaches the resurrection through the emotions of a group of women. That's Matthew's intent. Mark approaches it differently. Luke differently and John even differently. They all use the same historical truth, there's no contradiction, perfect harmony but each is selective as to the elements of the resurrection on which they focus for the purpose the Spirit of God gave to each writer. For Matthew, he focuses on the resurrection as seen through the emotions of a group of women.

As I read through this passage, it seem to me to be such a wonderful way to view the resurrection. Because we're not going to look at it historically, we're not going to look at analytically, we're not going to look at it even evidentially, that is as a forensic view, trying to prove it. We're going to look at it emotionally. We're going to look at it attitudinally. We're going to look at it through the heart and soul of some loving women who are sensitized to the event itself in marvelous and thrilling ways. We will then not coldly analyze the resurrection but I pray, God, we will feel the resurrection. We will experience the resurrection in the next couple of weeks as we share in the emotion of these women who first encountered the reality of the risen Christ.

But before we do that, can we set the time by looking at verse 1 in chapter 28? The Authorized version says, "In the end of the Sabbath at the dawning toward the first day of the week," and we'll stop there.

This is a very important note of time...most important. The little phrase "in the end of the Sabbath" is a unique construction in the Greek...apsae(?) Sabbaton, basically the best way to translate it would be "after the Sabbath." In fact, it would not be unfair but very consistent to translate it "long after the Sabbath." That little phrase then intends to say "long after the Sabbath" to express the idea that a certain interval of time has occurred since the Sabbath. Now the Sabbath ended Saturday at sundown. So this is a long time after the end of the Sabbath. How long? The next phrase tells us, "At the dawning toward the first day of the week," and again the Greek phrase used there is very interesting. In fact it again uses the word Sabbaton, again uses the word Sabbath, and what it literally says in the Greek is "at day one with reference to the Sabbath...at day one with reference to the Sabbath." Now the reason that is done is because the Jews did not name the days. They did not say

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday or anything like that. They simply named the days numerically with reference with the Sabbath. It was day one after the Sabbath. It was day two after the Sabbath. It was day three after the Sabbath, and so on through the week.

So, long after the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn on day one after the Sabbath sets the time for us. It is Sunday morning. Sabbath ended Saturday night. And now maybe ten hours have passed, it's nearing dawning early on Sunday morning. This is the third day the Lord has been in the grave. He was there a part of Friday, all of the Sabbath and so many hours already on the Sunday until it began to dawn on the morning of that first day with reference to Sabbath.

It is then the third day since the Lord was placed in the grave. Mark says, giving us the same time note, "Very early on the first day of the week at the rising of the sun." And Luke says, "At early dawn..." And John says, "It all began while it was still dark." So whatever happened is at the breaking of light, the very dawning and actually began when it was still dark. The stage is set then because it is the third day for a great event to happen. Jesus had said He would rise from the grave on the third day. He had said it many times, Matthew 12:40; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:23; Matthew 20 verse 19; Matthew 27:64 it was reaffirmed. Mark 9:31 records it; Mark 10:34; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:33 and then in Luke 24...chapter 24 it's mentioned in verse 7, verse 21, verse 26. It was repeated all through the Lord's ministry through the latter time that He would rise on the third day. So this is a very important time note as we begin chapter 28. It is resurrection day and it is a Sunday after the Sabbath.

We could even use that phrase "after the Sabbath," I think, in a figurative way, for the Sabbath had been the special day of rest for centuries, literally since the creation. But the Sabbath that Jesus was in the grave was the last authorized Sabbath. So it was not only the end of the Sabbath chronologically, it was the end of the Sabbath covenantally. The Sabbath was not only over as a day, it was over as an entity. And it was the dawning not only of a new day but of a new covenant and a new celebration of that new covenant which would no longer be, as Spurgeon said, at the end of a week of work but at the beginning of a new era. And that's why we meet on Sunday, not on the Sabbath, Saturday. So it is the dawning of the third day, the day of resurrection.

With that time reference, we now join the women. And this morning we're going to look at their attitudes and their emotions to begin with as they are confronted with the fact that Jesus whom they expect to be dead in the grave is gone and alive. Their first emotion is the emotion of sympathy. This is the first thing we see. And we can identify with that. These women loved the Lord Jesus Christ more than they love anyone. And women, as you know, have a tremendous capacity to love. I'm always amazed at the love of my own wife for me, given that she knows my perfections, but women have the marvelous capacity for love and devotion. And I thank God for that. And I can only imagine how it would be when women can love as fully as women are able to love and love one who was without imperfection. These women loved uniquely.

They had ministered with Jesus in Galilee. They had attended to His needs. They had provided food and hospitality and even money and resources for Him and His traveling disciples as they carried on the Galilean ministry. They had descended the journey to Jerusalem for Passover with Jesus and His group. They had been there at the cross. They were there when He was buried. We saw them in chapter 27 verse 56 gathered at the cross. We saw them in verse 61 sitting opposite the tomb. And now they're back again the morning of the third day. They're loyal. They're devoted. They're loving and they are sympathetic.

Let's look what it says in verse 1, "Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," that's Mary the mother of James and Joses, Mary who was the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, this other Mary mentioned in the prior two verses of chapter 27. The two of them come to the grave. Now they're not alone. Matthew just focuses on those two. Mark adds "Salome, the mother of James and John and the wife of Zebedee," she was there, too. Luke...that, by the way, is in Mark 16:1. Luke in chapter 24 verse 10 adds Joanna and Joanna was the wife of Chuza who was a steward of Herod. John only mentions Mary Magdalene but uses the plural pronoun "we" in chapter 20 verse 2, so we assume that he, too, sort of saw all that group of women. So if you compare the gospels you get the whole group.

So here comes a group of women early. They leave actually when it's dark, John indicates only to arrive at the grave just at the breaking of dawn. They loved the Lord. And they came out of sympathy. You say, "Did they come to see the resurrection?" No, they didn't come to see the resurrection. As many times as Jesus had talked about the resurrection, as many times as He had promised the resurrection, their faith could not handle that. They couldn't accept it. They couldn't understand it. They didn't believe it. You say, "Well, why are they there?" It says in verse 1 they came to see the grave, not to see the risen Lord, they came to see the grave.

You say, "Well, what's the point of coming to see a grave?" Well, Mark tells us, chapter 16, "And when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome-- or Salome, however you want to say it--had bought sweet spices." No doubt the night before when Sabbath ended at six o'clock the shops might then open and they were able to buy some spices. "Here they came in the morning to anoint Him and very early in the morning of the first day of the week they came to the grave at the rising of the sun." Their purpose was not to see a resurrection, their purpose was to anoint a corpse.

You say, "What was the point? Hadn't He already been anointed?" Indeed He had, in excess of 70 pounds of anointing substance had been put on His body and He had had that wrapped in the linen in which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus along with these women had so carefully anointed Him. They didn't embalm and the body decayed very fast. In fact, the Jews had a tradition which comes into play in John 11 and that tradition was that at the fourth day the spirit left the body permanently because the body was so decayed and corrupted that the spirit could no longer recognize it. And that

tradition comes into play because you remember the sister of Lazarus said to the Lord, "He's already four days dead, by this time he sinketh."

In other words, it's too late to do anything, the spirit is gone, the body is corrupt. And it may be that these dear women came on the third day realizing that had they come a day later there would be no way to minister to His already decayed and corrupted body. And so before it came to that, one last time they wanted to reach out in devoted love and sympathy to the one they adored. Even though He was dead, they wanted to show Him their love and respect and preserve His body if only for a few more hours. And more than that, demonstrate their deep love.

So it was an act of compassion. It was an act of sympathy. The thing that was in their hearts toward the crucified Christ was loving sympathy and compassion. They didn't have faith. They didn't have confidence in the resurrection. They just had devotion, love and sympathy and compassion.

And Mark tells us in chapter 16 that as they were walking along in the darkness anticipating the imminent dawn, they were having a discussion about how they were going to get the stone out of the way so they could do what they had come to do. They had commented that it was a very great stone. They had no idea it was being guarded by Romans. They didn't know it was sealed and couldn't be opened. They were anticipating coming into the empty garden and they would need some man or men to help them move that huge massive stone that had been rolled in front of the door. And so they were discussing the fact that they would have to face that large stone. So their emotion was sympathy. And what they lacked in faith they made up for in compassion. And what they lacked in understanding they made up for in courage to identify themselves so continually with Christ. And before we think too little of the women who came without faith, we have to ask ourselves where the disciples are. At least the women were there, whatever the motive.

It is one final act of love. But no sooner do they approach the grave than the emotion of sympathy is transformed into the emotion of terror. And that's the second one I want us to see. The emotion of terror.

Verse 2 says, "And behold," and that's a word to startle us, to shock us, to pull us up short, to make us realize that something dramatic has happened. "There was a great earthquake." Now this is the second earthquake in three days. There was an earthquake when Christ died, you remember, that split the rocks wide open and opened graves and dead people came alive among the saints. So this is the second earthquake. And God again is moving and God is demonstrating in a physiological way His activity. It's not new for God. You can look to the past. For example, back in Exodus 19:18 at the giving of the law, 1 Kings chapter 19 verse 11, God came in an earthquake. You can look into the future and you read about it in Joel 2:10 that the time of the coming of the Lord there will be an earthquake. Revelation 6, Revelation 8, Revelation 11 describe that kind of thing. Jesus Himself even referred to it in the great Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24:7, about the earthquake that's going to be

coming or earthquakes attendant with His return. So when God begins to move in the world, the world shakes.

And here these women are approaching...they haven't yet come to the garden. Instantly there is an earthquake. The epicenter of the earthquake is at the tomb. And the seismic radiation waves rumble through the ground beyond the grave and no doubt rock the land on which the women walk. They feel the earthquake not knowing what has happened.

Now what caused the earthquake? I suppose most people have just sort of concluded, "Well, the resurrection of Christ," but that's not the right answer. The resurrection didn't cause the earthquake. Matthew tells us what caused the earthquake. "There was a great earthquake for or because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven." When this angel hit the garden it created seismic waves. The word for "earthquake" is the root word seismos from which we get seismograph. And when the angel hit the land it sent out an earthquake. And these women not even knowing what was going on felt the movement of the earth, no doubt, as they approached the tomb. But the earthquake was not caused by the resurrection of Christ, it was caused by the arrival of an angel to open the tomb. Nothing, by the way, says that he let Jesus out of the tomb. That is a fallacy.

Have you ever seen a picture of an angel and a stone rolled back and Jesus coming out? That isn't right. I mean, Jesus did not have the power to raise Himself from the dead and then wait in there until somebody moved the stone so He could get out. No one actually saw the resurrection. The women experienced the seismic ramifications of that event of the angel coming and the phenomena around the resurrection. The resurrection occurred in an invisible way, no one was in there to see it. Christ came out of that grave.

Put it this way very simply. The angel did not move the stone to let the Lord out. The angel moved the stone to let the women in so they could see that He was already gone.

You say, "Well, how could He get out of there?" Well the same way John 20:26 says the disciples were meeting on the eighth day and Jesus was in their midst, the door being shut. The same way He came through the wall into the upper room is the same way He went out of the rock of the grave which we shouldn't imagine as any problem for one in His glorified form. So no one saw the resurrection. The angel came not to let the Lord out but to let the women in and to let the apostles in and to let us in and to let the whole world in to see that He wasn't there.

And when the women arrived, they went in and they saw. And when Peter and John arrived, they went in and they saw. And there were the linen wrappings undisturbed the way they had been wrapped around His body. And the head napkin in a separate place. There was no turmoil, no big hurry to unwrap Him and throw everything on the floor and get out of there. It was just the way it had been when His body was in it only He was gone.

And then the angel came after He left to move the stone so the world could come in and see that He was gone and sat there as the heavenly witness to what had happened. What a scene.

Can you imagine the Jewish leaders, on the other hand, are just having a great time thinking Jesus is dead and buried and captive to a tomb. And little do they know that all of their efforts would only increase His influence and only validate His resurrection.

So, there is the angel. He descends from heaven. He came, verse 2 says, rolled back the stone from the door, sat on it. So these women who have walked through an earthquake arrive at the garden. They come into the garden and they see...they see the tomb is open. The stone is rolled back.

Now at this point we have to digress to John's gospel to insert what happens because I believe this is the proper point to harmonize John's special interest in Mary Magdalene. Mary was to the women what Peter was to the Apostles. She was impetuous. What happens here is fascinating. The women come into the garden and I think this is the best place to insert this, although we can't be dogmatic, it seems to me to fit so perfectly here. When Mary comes in all she sees with her rather myopic viewpoint is this whole and the stone is gone. And she doesn't take note of this angel. And seeing that the stone is moved and the grave is empty is enough for her.

John tells us her reaction. Let's look at John chapter 20. "The first day of the week comes Mary," and then he notes, "They started out when it was yet dark unto the sepulcher and sees the stone taken away from the sepulcher." Now apparently that's all she saw. She missed the angel. She saw just that the stone was removed. And then verse 2, "Then...without a delay...she ran." She took off. "And she went right to the two most prominent apostles, she went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved," which is John's term used to describe himself and the fact that it's to Peter and to the other disciple probably indicates they were in two different homes during this Passover time. We can't be certain. But anyway, she ran to Peter and John to tell them.

And what did she tell them? "They have taken away the Lord out of the grave and we know not where they've laid Him." They've taken Him...they? I don't know who they are. She didn't know who they are...somebody. "Peter therefore went forth and so did John and they came to the grave." Verse 4 says they ran and John outran Peter and arrived first.

Now we'll leave that story, let's go back to Matthew. So as we come to the women then in the confrontation with the angel, Mary Magdalene is apparently gone. She's bolted to tell Peter and John that the body had been stolen. The other ladies stayed and they have the wonderful experience of an encounter with an angel.

The angel is described for us in verse 3. "His countenance...or his face...was like lightning." Now that's a pretty graphic description, isn't it? Like lightning flashing, brilliant, blazing. This, no doubt, to transmit the effulgence or the essence, the deity, the brilliance of the character of God. This is the glow of God. This is the Shekinah somehow transmitted from God to that angel, as it was on one occasion from God to Moses and shown on his face, do you remember that in the book of Exodus? This angel, this one representative of God, this messenger from God possessed the very character of deity. And it emanated from his glowing face. Also it says his raiment or garment was white as snow and this is emblematic of purity, holiness, of virtue.

So here is a holy angel...the holy angel sent from God bearing the very imprimatur of the character of God, an angel representative of deity, a created being who represents the uncreated cause of all beings, God Himself, this holy angel. This to distinguish him from some man, this to distinguish him from some demon, this to identify him as the agent of God, this beautiful, glorious, glowing, pure, holy being sitting on the stone as living witness to the risen Christ...God's own assigned witness.

And verse 4 says, "For fear of him the guards did shake." And it uses the same root word that's the word for earthquake in verse 2. The earth quaked and then it stopped and the guards didn't...they are still experiencing a personal earthquake. They were there to make sure nothing happened but something happened they couldn't have anticipated. And not only did they quake, but they became as dead. They went into temporary coma. They were knocked literally unconscious out of terror. Fear will do that. Fear will cause people to be paralyzed to the point where they go unconscious and that's precisely what happened. They were knocked cold out of fear. They were victims of divine power. They had seen something they had never seen or thought of or ever been able to comprehend and they were not now able to comprehend it.

You say, "Were the women afraid?" Yes, the women were afraid but they were sustained by the angel himself. He gave no ministry to the unbelieving guard, he reached out as the agent of God to minister to these women. Verse 5, "And the angel answered and said..." By the way, I want to note sometimes you read that in the Bible "and the angel answered and said" and you say..."Well, nobody asked a question." That's right. A better way to translate that would be "the angel explained and said." Some things need explaining even though someone isn't asking. And this one did. I mean, this definitely needed an explanation. Where is Christ and what are you doing here? And so he explained to the women, this is what he said, "Stop being terrorized...stop being afraid, there's no reason to be afraid." Now remember, Mary Magdalene is gone but the rest are there. She's right now on her way running trying to find Peter and John. Meanwhile the angel calms the fears of these ladies.

The soldiers had reason to fear when Christ arose. But those who loved Him had no reason to fear. So he says, "Stop being afraid." And then this, "For I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified." I know why you're here. Wasn't that a comforting word? "Oh, he knows us...he knows what we're coming here to do." That's a comforting thing. "Yes, I know why you're here, you seek Jesus."

They came to find a corpse, folks, not to see a resurrection. They came out of devotion to anoint a dead body, to put spices. And I suppose if it had been us we would have said, "Oh, you unbelieving women, you of little faith," and maybe a rebuke against their feeble minds and weak faith seem more in order. But no, God is so gracious. Their faith was weak, their understanding was feeble but God is ever gracious. And they loved the Lord Jesus Christ and even in the moments of their doubt and despair God recognized that love and responded in grace. And he says, "I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. Be comforted in this, He is not here." The Greek text says, "He was raised...He is not here, He was raised." And the word is a word to indicate resurrection from the dead. There's no question that He was dead. That's why the soldiers who were experts at death didn't break His legs, He was already dead. They thrust a spear into His side penetrating the sac around the heart and out came the blood from His heart and the water from the pericardium. He was dead. And these same women, along with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, had spent some time wrapping His body with spices. And had there been any indication of life they would have known that He was dead. And lying in that tomb for this the third day, no question He was dead.

But now He was raised. He was raised. It's an aorist passive. And the Bible emphasizes that He was raised by the power of the Father. Over and over again it says that in Scripture...Romans 6:4, Galatians 1:1, 1 Peter 1:3, a couple of those I mentioned to you. He was raised by the power of the Father. It also says, doesn't it, in John 10:18, "I have power to lay My life down and I have power to...what?...take it up again." So He was raised not only by the Father but He was raised by His own power. And then in Romans 8:11 it says He was raised by the power of the Spirit. "It is the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead." So the whole trinity is involved in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the angel gives this incredible announcement, "He's not here He was raised." The point is He's alive.

And then I love this, "He was raised," it says, "as He said." Isn't that great? I mean, He just jolts them with the memory that this is exactly what He said He would do on the third day, just like He said. And by the way, Luke 24:8 says, "And they remembered His words." So, that's what He meant...so that's what He was saying.

And then the angels says, verse 6, "Come, see the place where He lay." See the place where He lay...go on in. Well Luke 24:3 and 4 says they did. They went in. And it also says the angel showed up on the inside, too. And when they got inside the angel appeared again and gave them basically the same speech. You say, "Why did he give it twice?" Well, it was a little hard to believe the first time. It seems to me the kind of message you'd need to repeat at least twice...He is not here, He's raised?

And so as they went on the inside they got the same message and it's recorded in Mark 16:5 and 6 that on the inside that angel repeated the message...twice to emphasize the incredible reality that so

stunned their minds. It didn't come easily to startled minds.

Then Luke 24:4 says that first angel who gave that speech twice was joined by a second angel...one at the head of where the body lay and one at the feet of where the body lay. Beautiful picture. Do you remember the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament on the top had the Mercy Seat where atonement was made for sin? And on both sides it had angels? And here with an angel on one side and an angel on the other side and Christ in the middle is the true Mercy Seat where Christ is offered the satisfaction for the sins of the world.

And then John tells us in his gospel about these two angels being positioned there, chapter 20 I think it's verse 12. And I see in that that emblem of the Mercy Seat. If we go to Luke again, Luke 24:5 to 7, Luke says those two angels then gave another message. And together those two angels said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He's not here, He was raised. Remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee saying the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again?" Now this is the third time they repeat the same message. This is hard to understand, it's a powerful thing they're experiencing.

And finally after that third time he says, "And they remembered the words of Jesus." And once it had gotten through to their minds, the angel then concluded back in verse 7 of Matthew 28 with a command. He said, "And go quickly." This is not a time to be wasted at the tomb, this is not a time to hang around. Fascination has to give way to proclamation, right? "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He's risen from the dead."

Now again, I thought to myself as I was reading this..."Boy, my temptation would be go and don't tell His disciples...they're not here, they're going to pay for it. Those blockheads, this time they're going to miss out and I'm not going to tell them. They need a week of pain, then we'll tell them." But that's not the heart of the Lord, is it? Those disciples, oh, they were vaccilating, they were weak, they were witless, they fled, they denied, they abandoned the Savior and yet he says, I don't want them to know a moment's anguish or a moment's misery, or a moment's grief, I want you to go as fast as you can and tell them Christ is alive. That's grace, isn't it? What grace that is. Tell His disciples He was raised from the dead.

Now let me draw this together for this morning. Listen very carefully. Why were the women the first to experience the angel? Why were the women first to see the risen Christ? Oh, I read on that, I thought I'm going to examine that and I read many, many things. One writer said, "Because God chooses the weak to confound the strong." We don't want to go any further with that point. Another writer said...another writer said, "God rewards the faithful and they had served the Lord in the past and so they were to be specially rewarded." Another writer said, "Death came by a woman in the garden so life comes to a woman in the garden." That's nice...a good sentiment (laughter). Someone else said, "The deepest sorrow deserves the greatest joy." Another said, "Supreme love deserves supreme

privilege."

You want to know the truth? You know why those women were the first to see the angel and the living Christ? Because they were there. That's right. Isn't that profound? I mean, if you're not there you're not going to see it. I mean, they were there and so they saw it. If anybody else would have been there they would have seen it. I mean, you don't have to get too profound in some of this.

You know what that says to me? I don't want to extrapolate too much on this but it's nice if you're there when the Lord does wonderful things. There's a great spiritual truth in that somewhere and that is that the closer you stay to the Lord and what He's doing, the more you're going to enjoy what He's doing. I don't know about you but I'd rather be there and experience it than hear it from somebody else, wouldn't you? I praise God for people who are there. I mean they're there when the Lord is working. They're there when His people gather together. They're there when His Word is taught. They're there when it's time to come to your knees before Him. They're there when it's time to call on His power in ministry. And they're the ones that experience first hand the moving of the power of God. No, they saw it because they were there.

I trust that you will be the kind of person like those women. What you may lack in faith you make up for in devotion, what you may lack in understanding you make up for in loyalty. And God will confirm your weakness and turn it into strength because you're faithful enough and loyal enough to be where He is and where He's moving and where He's working.

And then the angel said something else to them, but we're going to look at that next week and all the ramifications of it. Let's bow in prayer.

What a lesson, Father, we've seen this morning. We thank You for the example of these women. We thank You for the pattern of their sympathy to one they loved so deeply. Even demonstrating love to a Savior that was dead and utterly unable to help them in any way, that being the truest measure of love, love that loves and gives sacrificially when it knows there can be no return, so did those women love. And we thank You even for the fact that they were there. It was love that drew them. Even though they didn't understand, they wanted to be in that place. Even as they had lingered by the grave after the Savior was buried, so they come back soon after the Sabbath, a day in which no journey would have been possible if they were to keep the law. Thank You for the demonstration of such loyal faithfulness. And thank You that You met them in their sympathy and removed their fear and their terror.

Father, teach us to be like those women to be so faithful, so devoted not to a Christ we assume to be dead but one we know to be alive to be in the place where He moves and works and shows His power. And may the resurrection be believed by every person here for the truth that it is and in

believing that Jesus lives may we know that by faith in Him we live also. We pray in His name. Amen.

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