

### **Three Responses to the Resurrection**

Matthew 28

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Turn back to Matthew chapter 28 as we return again to the portion of Scripture I read earlier in the service, which is the first account in the New Testament of the resurrection. Over the many years that we have come through Resurrection Sundays, we have been delighted to work through many passages. There are about 104 references in the New Testament to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you would expect, it is a major theme of the New Testament. "The one who raised Jesus will raise us." "Because I live, you will live also." "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will never die." There are many such statements concerning the resurrection of our Lord. But I thought for this morning and for this season this year, we would go back to the original story of the resurrection in Matthew chapter 28.

There are some very obvious things that you draw immediately when you look at this story. One is the simple plainness of it. It is not some kind of cultivated mystery. It is a very plain and simple and straightforward story. It is so because it is history. It is not fantasy. It is not imagination. It is not some kind of vision. It is not a hallucination. This is a real historical event.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, a real man who died, went into the grave, and came out visibly, physically, literally from the grave on the third day. That is, of course, the foundation of the Christian faith. There are religions all over the world that have dead leaders. Only Christianity has a living leader, a resurrected leader. That sets us apart. That is one thing that sets us apart.

The other thing that sets us apart, of course, is that we have the only revelation from God, and that is the Holy Scripture. This is the truth and it is the truth simply unadorned given to us by Matthew, the historian and the disciple of Jesus under the influence and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Another remarkable part of this story is that it features women. It's about women who were there when Jesus came to life, and they were the first eyewitnesses of the risen Christ. There have been lots of people who have talked about why the Lord chose the women or why the women had this experience, and we'll talk about that a little later. Some have suggested that it was a woman in the garden who sent the whole human race into corruption and here it is women in a garden who have the privilege of being the first eyewitnesses of the restoration of life and redemption and salvation through the resurrection of Christ.

But it's about the women. And it's about the emotions that they go through. The way that I want you to kind of go through this text is from one emotion to another, from one response, one attitude to another. They are really experiencing this. This is reality for them. And again, I want to emphasize this is a true story, a real resurrection, a literal experience that they had, and they respond with normal human emotions, the sequence, the panoply of emotions that we would expect them to manifest.

So let's look at the story, and the setting is pretty simple for us. Verse 1, "Now after the Sabbath," The Sabbath ran from Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown. That was the Sabbath day. Christ had been put into the grave before the Sabbath. That meant that He would be in the grave Friday, in the grave Saturday, the Sabbath, and then in the grave for a good portion of Sunday, since Sunday began at sundown on Saturday night.

So fulfilling the promise that there would be three days that He would be in the ground before He was raised, He was in the ground on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. So this was after the Sabbath, hours after. In fact, the very expression there could mean, "a long time after," and since it would have been from sundown to sunup, a good portion of hours, perhaps as many as 12, had passed. "It began now to dawn toward the first *day* of the week." And this again marks the third day since the crucifixion.

The first thing we see with regard to these women is sympathy or compassion. That's the first response. That's the first attitude. That's the first emotion. "As it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave." Now it says they "came to look at the grave," but they had a purpose in mind. By the way, Mary Magdalene, I think we all know, a woman who has a very prominent place in those who followed our Lord Jesus Christ and we perhaps have a little more trouble if we just look at verse one figuring out who "the other Mary" is. That would be only because we hadn't read verse 56 back in the previous chapter.

Mary Magdalene is there associated with "Mary the mother of James and Joseph." And as well as the mother of the sons of Zebedee. So Mary is a Mary – there were many Marys. Why? Because one of the most popular Jewish names was Miriam, the name of the one who had basically been a sister of Moses, who had rescued him and gotten him safely to Pharaoh's daughter. And so that was a popular name, and by the time you get down to the New Testament, Miriam has become Mary.

So we read that Mary Magdalene was there. The other Mary would have been her friend, who was the mother of James and Joseph. Mark adds that the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee was there. Her name was Salome and in Luke's account, he says there was another woman there by the name of Joanna, and Joanna was the wife of one of Herod's stewards. So this is a group of women. And in John's gospel, they're referred to as "we." If you put the whole composite together, you find out who all of them are.

These are remarkable women. Now they have been following Jesus from Galilee. They're all Galilean women, and He has been in Judea for many, many months leading up, of course, to his death, and they had come down from Galilee and they'd followed Jesus. We don't know all the details of that. We don't know if that was 24/7 for all those months, but there was this group of women who followed the Lord to minister to Him and His disciples any way that they possibly could. They were very loyal and very faithful. They stood by Him at the cross. They were there at the cross when all the disciples except John had fled. When the arrest came in the garden, they all scattered and fled out of fear and hiding. And, of course, Peter got to the trial standing by the fire, and over three different, separate occasions denied the Lord. And they looked like a very disloyal and ugly group of apostles.

But the women, they were faithful. They were loyal. They were standing there when Jesus was being crucified, standing from afar, watching it all happen. And then, as we see in the previous chapter, on

Friday after they took his body down and Joseph of Arimathea took Him to the grave where they were going to lay him, and Nicodemus joined him, and they were putting 100-pound weight of spices on that body and putting it in the grave, these women were there.

So they were there during the ministry. They were there at the crucifixion. They were even there at the burial sitting and watching all of this happen. If you go to verse 61 of the previous chapter, “And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary.” They saw the body wrapped. They saw the spices placed on the body. They saw the body put in the tomb. They saw the large stone rolled against the tomb, as well.

They were very faithful women, very loyal. And now, they show up again on the morning of Sunday, the first day of the week. Are they there to wait for the resurrection? Jesus said He would rise from the dead. He said that from the beginning of His ministry. He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I’ll raise it again.” He said that He would be arrested, and beaten, and crucified, and that He would be raised from the dead. Were they there for the resurrection? Well, no.

They were there, Mark 16 says, to bring more spices. We know that the Jews didn’t embalm. There was no exchange of bodily fluid, so corruption was immediate. In fact, when Lazarus had been dead four days, they said there’s a stench of the body by that time. That would have been true in the case of any corrupting body over three days. They came purely out of sympathy to anoint the body of Jesus in the grave. This was sympathy. This was compassion.

And you have to believe that this was really agonizing compassion. This was heart-wrenching kind of compassion. They knew that there was a stone over the grave, because it says that in the previous chapter. They didn’t know the grave had been sealed with a Roman seal, which meant no one was authorized to break it. They didn’t know that the Roman guard had been placed there.

So as they began, Mark tells us they were on the way there, they were asking themselves, “Who will roll the stone away? Because it is very large.” So they weren’t sure at daybreak that there would be any man or men there to help them move the stone. The first emotion then is a kind of a crushing compassionate sympathy mixed with massive disappointment.

They had to have been a little like those on the road to Emmaus, who said, “We thought He was going to be the Messiah. We thought this was it. And He’s dead, and He’s buried.” And they watched Him while they brought His body off the cross and brought His body to the grave and wrapped His body and dumped the spices inside the wrappings. They watched it. They knew He was dead. They came back purely out of compassion.

They couldn’t shut off their affection for Him. They couldn’t shut off their adoration of Him. It would have been wonderful to say that they came because they wanted to sit there until He came out. That wasn’t the case. It was just one final act of elevated love to One they so much adored.

But their sympathy didn’t last very long because it turned immediately into terror. This is the second emotion. Verse 2, “Behold - ” there are a lot of “beholds.” You can scan your eyes down all the way to verse 9, and you’ll see “behold” repeated a number of times. This is one of those “behold” events. This is a shocking event.

“Behold, a severe earthquake had occurred.” This is a mega kind of earthquake. That’s what the language indicates, and this was not the first one. If you go back to the previous chapter, 27:51, when Jesus died on the cross, when He “cried out with a loud voice, - ” “It is finished,” “ - and yielded up His Spirit - ” and His life ended hanging on the cross, “behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; - ” the veil into the holy of holies, meaning the priesthood was over and all access to God was wide open to anyone since Christ had provided the way. The temple veil is shredded from top to bottom. At the same time, “the earth shook - ” to such a severe degree that “ - the rocks were split - ” open.

So on Friday at the death of Christ, there was a rock-splitting earthquake. Here on Sunday morning, there is another earthquake and the epicenter of this earthquake is the tomb of our Lord Jesus. And as they were walking there, surely they felt the seismic waves extending out of the epicenter of the tomb under their feet as they made their way in that direction.

Terror grips them in this situation. Not just because of the earthquake, which would have been terrifying in itself, but because the earthquake was a result of an angel of the Lord descending from heaven who came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. An angel descended from heaven. The earthquake was not caused by Jesus leaving the grave but by the arrival of an angel.

It was the earthquake angel. The angel did not come – please notice this – to open the tomb and let Jesus out. By the time the angel arrived to roll the stone away, Jesus had already been gone. Sometimes you see paintings of the resurrection with the stone rolled away and Jesus coming out. That’s not true. The angel did not come to let Jesus out. The angel came to roll the stone away to let the eyewitnesses in.

Jesus walked through a wall that night when He came to the disciples in the upper room and the door was locked. He didn’t need to have the stone rolled away. Nothing in this text indicates that the angel let Jesus out. Everything indicates Jesus had already gone. That’s what the angel said. “He has risen. He’s not here.” He doesn’t say, “I just let Him out. He’s right over there.”

By the time the women arrived, the angel came, the earthquake, the stone, He’s gone. He’s disappeared. He didn’t need to come out the door. He didn’t need to come out the doorway. He was in there and then He was not in there. He was somewhere else. And for the next 40 days before His ascension, He appeared and disappeared in that same fashion in His glorified body. And yet, He was physical.

So by the time they arrive, the tomb is now open so they can go in, so they can see, the linen clothes lying there, not hastily unwrapped and thrown in a corner as maybe you might expect, or even more so if somebody stole the body, they would have taken it wrapped and not unwrapped it and taken a naked corrupting body. But the grave clothes are lying there in the place that they were when they were on the body as if the body came through the grave clothes, the body part here and the head covering here. And there sat on the stone this angelic witness from heaven.

Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders had to be waking up somewhere and thinking what a wonderful weekend this had been. They got rid of this problem person, Jesus. He was now dead. He had been buried. The tomb had been sealed and they had been given a Roman guard to stay there in front of that stone so that none of His followers could come and steal the body. They were no doubt ready for

a celebratory day. Little did they know that He would be out of that grave probably before they were even up.

The angel is described in very simple language. "His appearance was like lightning." His appearance was like lightning. It has to be like something because you can't describe what is heavenly. So it has to be like something we can describe and it was like lightning, dazzling, flashing, supernatural brilliance. "His clothing as white as snow." That's white. Not a white like a white garment, a white material or white paint. That's white like light is white. The difference between looking at your white shirt and looking up and directly into a light bulb or into the sun. This is dazzling, blazing white, lightning-like, this angelic being. He manifests purity. He manifests supernatural brilliance.

Really, he looks a lot like the transfigured Christ in Matthew 17. Remember when He pulled back His flesh and He was shining blazing bright, and as a result of that, the three disciples fell over? Well, here the guards have the same response when they see this heavenly visitor. They're devastated. The guards, it says in verse 4, "shook for fear of Him and became like dead men." So we know here, then, that the guards felt the earthquake. We know that the guards saw the angel and it terrified them and knocked them into some kind of a coma. We know that. That was their experience. Feel the earthquake, see this blazing heavenly being so shocking, so terrifying that they literally passed out and they're lying in heaps and become like dead men.

That's all very interesting because if you go down to verse 11 when they finally woke up, they went on their way into the city. They went to the chief priests. They went to the chief priests because they really didn't want to go to their authority, who would be the governor, the Roman governor, because they had lost their prisoner, and there was dire consequences for that kind of failure to perform your duty. So they go to the chief priests because they know they were the ones that requested the assignment and they reported what had happened.

So what did they say? What did they report had happened? Well, it had to be exactly what caused them to fall over in a stupor. They felt an earthquake. They saw the stone rolled away and a blazing being and they were terrified to the point where they don't remember anything after that. That sounds like something supernatural. They can't allow that, so while these men who thought this was going to be a good day find out it's going to be the worst of days face this fact they have to do something to fix the problem, and so they all assemble, in verse 12, consult, and they decide to give a large sum of money to the soldiers – that's bribery – and they say to them, "This is what you say. 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' "

Small question I would have. How do you know that if you were asleep? That story doesn't have any possibility of being believed unless you're willing to believe anything as some people are, and they did. And by the way, they also said, "If you're worried about the governor, if it comes to the governor's ears, we'll win him over and keep you out of trouble." They were good at winning over Pilate, weren't they? They had done it to have Jesus crucified. They would do it again.

So the soldiers took the money, did as they had been instructed, spread a lie that while they were sleeping the disciples came and stole the body. And the story was widely spread among the Jews and is to this day, to the very day that Matthew was writing, that was the popular legend about what happened. The disciples came and stole the body of Jesus.

Well, that's the scene. It's a terrifying, terrifying scene. It was terrifying for the soldiers. It was terrifying for the women. They're standing there in terror because in verse 5 the angel says now to the women – the soldiers haven't left yet. They're still in a coma, "Don't be afraid," or "Stop fearing," or "Fear not." Which indicates that they were afraid. They were terrified.

"Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus - " the angel says " - who has been crucified." Just a note here. One of the women left. That was Mary Magdalene. As soon as she saw the open tomb, I think before, maybe even the angelic appearance, she bolted. The rest remained. She was on her way back to Peter and John to report that someone had stolen the body. She makes a hasty run back, but the rest of the women, they stay and they are given this angelic message, "Stop being afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. You are looking for Him to anoint His body. You're not going to find His body. You're not going to be able to put spices on His body. He is not dead. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said."

Literally, "He was raised. He was raised." An aorist passive. He was raised by God the Father, the New Testament says. He was raised by His own power the New Testament says. He was raised by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament says all three. This is a fully Trinitarian resurrection. There's no rebuke for these women. The angel doesn't say, "You should have been here waiting for the resurrection." There's no rebuke here.

This is not a time for rebuking them. It's hard to believe in a resurrection. It's unimaginable to believe that after seeing His execution, seeing His burial, they would just be able to walk down there on a Sunday morning and expect a resurrection. That's asking an awful lot. So there's no rebuke of the women.

Instead, this angel wants to give them firsthand information. So in verse 6 he says, "Come, see the place where He was lying." Come in. That's the reason the stone was rolled away, to let the women in. And later on, to let Peter and John in.

Luke 24 says that they went into the tomb, the women, and when they got into the tomb, the angel appeared in the tomb and was sitting there where Jesus had laid. And then we read in Luke 24 and also in John 20 that another angel appeared so that there was an angel on one side and the other side almost like the angels that are over the mercy seat in the Old Testament. There were angels on both sides of where the body had been.

These magnificent, glorious, angelic beings there to declare that Christ is alive. "Come, see the place where He lay." And again, I just remind you there's no description of the event, nothing about what happened, nothing about how He came out of the garments, nothing about how He came out of the grave, nothing about that. That's really not important. That it happened is important. How it happened is inexplicable. It is, after all, a miracle.

And then the command from the angel comes in verse 7, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead;" Go quickly. Don't delay. No more time is to be wasted at the tomb. I love Mark's account of their response, Mark 16:8. "They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." As they passed people moving away from the tomb, they didn't speak to a soul. They were terrified, trembling, frightened, and they were running as fast as they could to deliver this message. "Tell His

disciples that He was raised from the dead;” Tell them the end of their night of sorrow is over. Get there as fast as you can. I see this as a grace. God was gracious to them, not rebuking them for a failure to believe in the resurrection and failing to show up to wait for Him to come out.

And now you might think those disciples cowering, huddled up in the upper room, afraid that everything had been lost like those on the road to Emmaus, “We thought He was to be the Messiah, and it all went bad.” Afraid of being arrested by the Roman soldiers, afraid rather than courageous and bold. And they were doubtful and unbelieving. They didn’t expect the resurrection. You might have thought that the Lord would have made them suffer in misery for hours or days without knowing about it just as some kind of penance. But no, “Run, get there fast. Tell them He was raised from the dead. Tell those disloyal disciples.”

So the women, then, become the first evangelists of the resurrection. Back to what we said at the very beginning. Why did they become the first evangelists? Well, somebody suggests that God chooses the weak and gets glory from that. Somebody else suggests that they were the witnesses because God rewards faithful people and they had been faithful. They were there at the cross and they were there at the tomb when He was buried. Some suggest that it’s kind of a payoff. The deepest sorrow deserves the highest joy, or maybe the highest love earns the highest privilege, all of that. Let me give you the real answer.

The reason they were the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection is because they were there, okay? You can get super spiritual if you want. The truth is they were there. And if anybody else had been there, male or female, they would also have been original eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Sometimes in the kingdom of God just being there makes a difference. Like this morning, I would hate to think of not being here for this, wouldn’t you? They were there. They were there. They were the first witnesses because they were there. Great spiritual truth, folks. Just be here. Be where God is doing His work. Be among His people.

So they are chosen to do that. And they go quickly and they have a message. “Behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.” So the angel says, “There’s going to be a great rendezvous in Galilee, a great rendezvous in Galilee. Everybody’s going to get together in Galilee.” This is a promise. Jesus even promised that He would come out of the grave, that He would come to life again, that this was anything but the end, that, in fact, in some ways it was just the beginning.

But back in Matthew 26:32, Jesus said, “After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” So He told them, “We’re going to have a big rendezvous, post-resurrection rendezvous, in Galilee.” So the angel is just reiterating the message that Jesus gives, and we could conclude that angels are consistent in revealing the Word of God as God has Himself declared it so. Angels echo the truth of God. So the angel says exactly what Jesus said. There’s going to be a rendezvous in Galilee.

Now that wouldn’t happen for a week. This is Sunday, remember? And the first thing that we know happens is Peter and John arrive at the grave, and John kind of stops and Peter bolts in as he always does, and they find the Lord isn’t there, and they’re not sure how to process that. They haven’t seen Him yet. But there are a couple of disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. We don’t really know the whole story of why they were doing that, but Jesus appears to them, remember, reveals himself to them, explains the Old Testament to them.

That's the first post-resurrection appearance beyond the women to those disciples on the road to Emmaus. And then they're all gathered in the upper room on Sunday night. They're all there, with one exception. There's one guy missing, and that was Thomas. And he's not there, but all the rest of them are there and Jesus comes into the room through the wall with the door being locked. The door was locked because they were all afraid, all huddled up, worried about what the authorities were going to do to him, if they were going to get arrested. And Jesus walks through the wall, comes in, and even eats with them, which tells you a little about His glorified body, that it can go through a wall and yet it eats with them a dinner, a meal. That's a glorified body. We'll have a body something like that, the Scripture says.

So that appearance occurs that Sunday night in Jerusalem, in the upper room, but because Thomas wasn't there, there needed to be another appearance. And so the following Sunday, Thomas is there with them. The Lord appears one more time. You remember Thomas who has been doubting the reality of the resurrection, is told to reach his hand and touch the side of Christ, and touch the wounds. And Thomas says, "Lord, Lord, there's no more doubt."

So for those eight days between those two Sundays, Resurrection Day and the following one, those appearances happen. After that, the Lord begins to appear on a regular basis over 40 days, or the remaining 32 days, to his followers in Galilee. And that final Galilee convocation is where the great commission is given at the end of the chapter, "Go into all the world preach the gospel, make disciples, baptize, teach them to observe whatever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you to the end of the age."

So I just want you to be sure that you understand that before the rendezvous in Galilee, there are some appearances to select disciples in Jerusalem. But the big gathering where everyone was there is in Galilee, and I think it's referred to in 1 Corinthians 15 as the gathering of 500 in one place at one time who saw the risen Christ, saw the risen Christ.

So the women are told, "Go tell the disciples that there's going to be a great gathering in Galilee." As they go, verse 8, as they "left the tomb," they left quickly. They're running with still "fear," but a new emotion begins to take over, "and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples." Trying to shed the fear and the terror of that angelic visitor, and that empty tomb, and that rolled stone, and those comatose soldiers trying to divest themselves of all of that phenomenon that was so terrifying takes a little time.

But apparently as they go, it turns to joy. There's enough evidence now that He is risen. The tomb is empty. The grave clothes are lying there. The angels of heaven have given them direct and divine revelation. He is alive. It begins to settle in their minds as they head toward the rest of the apostles.

We don't know how far they went, but the emotion of joy gives way to an even greater one. Verse 9, another "behold." "And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them." Somewhere on the road, this is pretty typical of post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. They just happen. On the road to Emmaus, He just appears and you remember He was gone, Luke 24. Here, out of nowhere, He just appears. They met him. This is so wonderful, so understated. It says, "Jesus met them," and actually the old English versions would translate it this way, "Said 'All hail.'" The contemporary translation of that was, "Jesus met them and said, 'Hello.'" "

Wow. Again, the miracles that Jesus did, the wonders that are so incomprehensible, and staggering, and supernatural are conveyed in the simplest terms because this is real life and real history. And it's spoken of with a genuine plainness. We would say that they saw Jesus all of a sudden, and He said, "Hi, ladies." Whoa. They recognized him. They recognized him. And He spoke to them in normal language and gave them a familiar greeting, *Chairete* in the original. And to prove that it was really Him, "they came up and laid hold of his feet," took hold of his feet. That shows that their relationship was one of awe, and wonder, and worship, because then it says, "and they worshiped Him." They worshiped Him.

Started out that morning with compassion and sympathy, a kind of sadness, a deep agonizing sadness. That emotion was replaced rapidly by terror so that they were shaking.

Their terror, once they heard the angelic message and began to process that Christ was alive, turned into joy. Their joy is just finding root, and the next thing they know their joy has reached its pinnacle because they now see Jesus. He speaks in those familiar tones of his voice and they know it's him. They come up close to him. They hold onto his feet. This is not an apparition. This is not their imagination. This is not a hallucination. This is really Him. And He is the one they have always worshiped, and they worship Him here, *proskuneō*. They bow low before Him.

What an emotional morning. Gripping sympathy, terrifying fear, exhilarating joy, transcendent worship all in one experience in one morning. The evidence is now starting to become overwhelming. The tomb is empty. The grave clothes are undisturbed, the guards are unconscious, and the angels are giving testimony from heaven as to the fact that He is alive. And now we have our hands on Him. We are holding Him in our hands. Eyewitnesses.

And what is remarkable about these eyewitnesses is they didn't expect a resurrection so they didn't fabricate one. That's one of the greatest evidences of the resurrection is people don't make up resurrections and then go die as martyrs for lies they invented. The disciples were having such a difficult time believing in the resurrection anyway that even when they were told they doubted. But they all went out and virtually all of them died as martyrs or exiles for one that they knew was raised from the dead.

Well, Jesus is there. They're holding his feet. Verse 10 He speaks, and here is another emotion. "Jesus said to them, 'Stop being afraid; - ' Stop being afraid. Let whatever vestiges of that fear are still there, that awe, that wonder " - go and take word to My brothers to leave for Galilee, - " soon " - and there they will see Me.' "

Go tell everyone, all the brothers. This is the first time Jesus refers to his followers as "brothers." Once they were disciples, students, then they were friends, now they are brothers? And He's calling them "brothers" when they are the most disloyal, and the most doubtful, and the most unbelieving, and the most cowardly. This is grace upon grace upon grace. "Go tell them. Go tell them right now that we're going to have a great meeting in Galilee."

She didn't know, but that meeting was going to last for weeks. And He was going to be the Teacher and I'm pretty sure she was there being a student. Well, I should say more than "she," those women. What that produced was hope, and that's kind of the ultimate emotion, hope. The story is not

finished. This is not over. This is not the last we're going to see of Him. They held onto Him.

Remember Mary Magdalene, when she finally found Him, held onto Him, and He said, "You can't hold onto Me. I have to go back to my Father." But it wasn't going to be for 40 days. This is hope. Hope that He was alive, that He was the Messiah, that He was the Son of God, that Scripture was true, that what He had promised He would do, hope that the story was not over, hope that they were a part of that story. They were going to be in the story. The story was not finished. They were going to be with Him in Galilee. This was not the end.

They didn't know how long it would be, but they knew it wasn't over. Their hearts were filled with hope, filled with hope. What starts out as a day of sadness ends up with exhilarating hope in the rest of the story and their role in it.

So that's the women's account of the resurrection from an emotional viewpoint, and legitimate they are. They give testimony to the reality of this event. It is unaffected, uncluttered, simple, honest testimony recorded in the New Testament. And because this event really happened, some very important things were affirmed. Number one, that the Bible is true. The Bible is true. The first thing Peter does, he stands up on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit has come and he preaches the first sermon in Jerusalem.

And the first sermon he preaches in Jerusalem is on the resurrection of Christ. He preaches that God raised Him from the dead, and he uses Psalm 16 as his text, the promise in Psalm 16 that God would never allow the Holy One, the Messiah to see corruption, but would show Him the path of life. In fact, Jesus on the road to Emmaus even told those disciples. And then again that night, that night of the resurrection in the upper room told them that the Old Testament promised that Messiah would suffer and die and rise again.

So the resurrection validates that the Bible is trustworthy, that it is true. The resurrection also affirms that Jesus is the Son of God. Romans 1:4, Paul says, "he was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection." It was the resurrection that authenticated His divine nature.

Third thing that we could say about the resurrection is that it affirms that salvation is complete. Romans 4:25, "he was raised for our justification." He died on the cross bearing our sins. Was God satisfied with the sacrifice? He was because He raised Him from the dead for our justification. In other words, God raising Christ from the dead is God's way of affirming the work on the cross. He was raised by God to assure us that in his sight He accomplished our redemption. He paid in full for our sins. He bought us eternal life. He provides forgiveness of sins.

A fourth reality. The resurrection indicates that the church is established. The Lord said, "I'll build my church and the gates of Hades - " a euphemism for death " - will not prevail against it." Death didn't. Death couldn't hold Him. And He, then, is alive. In Ephesians 1 it said God raised Him from the dead and made Him head of the church. So again, we're part of an association, an organism, a religion, if you will, with a living Lord. We don't go to tombs to find our leader. He is alive. He is the head of the church. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, then, affirms the accuracy of scripture, declares the deity of Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ affirms for us without question that our salvation is complete, that

the church is established, and another one, that heaven is waiting. Heaven is waiting. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I'll come again and receive you unto myself." All that we would ever want is proven by the resurrection.

And one more great reality. Judgment is coming. The judge is alive. The judge is alive. He came to life so that He might judge the living and the dead. And His will be a judgment of damnation and a judgment of life. Some will pass through that judgment into eternal life, some into eternal judgment. Judgment is coming. He lives to be the judge. This is part of Peter's Pentecost sermon, the first one he preaches in Jerusalem.

So what is the significance of the resurrection? The Word of God is true. Jesus is indeed deity. Salvation is complete. The church is established. Heaven is waiting. Judgment is coming. This is our hope. The story of the women ended in hope. The story isn't over, and it isn't. And we know the full remaining realities of the story that are unfolded in the rest of the New Testament that give us all these implications of his resurrection.

The question is: do you know the risen Christ? Have you fallen at His feet? Do you worship Him? Is He your Lord, and Savior, and Master, and Redeemer? Not enough to admire Him as a teacher. It's not enough to be curious about Him as a miracle worker or a healer. He claims to be the only hope, the only Savior, the only one who can give life, the only one who can cause you to be delivered from hell and granted eternal heaven.

There's no salvation in any other than the Lord Jesus Christ. There's only one true religion in the world, and that's Christianity, and the only thing that makes Christianity distinct is because it alone provides the Savior that sinners need. This is Him, the living and risen Christ. Embrace Him as your Lord and your Savior. Pray with me.

Father, we thank You for our wonderful morning together, for the joys of beautiful music, wonderful fellowship, the thrill of again being taken by Holy Scripture back to these glorious moments when Christ came out of the grave. We thank you, Lord Jesus for your sacrifice for us. We thank You for your resurrection. We thank You for the forgiveness that comes through your death and the life that comes through your resurrection.

We thank You for your Word. We thank You that we can trust its promises. We live in hope. We live in hope and our hope is not a shame because You have proven to be true to Your Word and Your promise. Such is the history of your dealings with men. You always keep Your Word. So we live in hope. As Christ came out of the grave fulfilling His promise, doing exactly what He said He would do and giving hope to those in that first generation, we have hope for that resurrection yet to come because You are a God who keeps His Word. You will raise all those who belong to You through Christ to eternal glory.

It's in that hope that we live and rejoice. Deliver us from being occupied with mundane things. Forgive us for being so absorbed in what is transitory, and passing, and corruptible, brief. Help us to live in the light of the hope of eternal heaven, to lay up treasure there, to put our affections there, our loves there, set our thoughts there, live in the light of that which is to come. Fill us with hope that will be revealed, a hope that is incorruptible, undefiled, fades not away, reserved in heaven for us

because of the risen Christ. Put that hope in every heart. Open every heart to that hope.

Father, now we ask that You would use what has been planted in our minds afresh today to not only guide our thoughts and our conversation through the rest of this wonderful Resurrection Day, but to make us more useful in speaking of the glory of Christ, even in the days ahead. To that end that we might in lifting Him up find people drawn to Him.

All things for Your praise and Your glory we pray. Amen.

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