

Reactions to the Resurrection

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-94

Tonight we come to the last in our series on the Gospel of Matthew, looking at the great highlights of this tremendous, tremendous treatise on the life and ministry of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We come to the last chapter for this final message, Chapter 28. And I want to read to you the first ten verses which chronicle for us, Matthew's wonderful revelation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"Now after the Sabbath, at is began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred. For the angel of the Lord and descended from Heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightening and his garment as white as snow.

"And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. And the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid. For I know that you are looking for Jesus, who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen just as He said. Come; see the place where He was lying. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He is going before you into Galilee. There you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.'

"And they departed quickly from the tomb, with fear and great joy, and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.'"

The world has heard many important messages. The world has learned many great truths and seen many dramatic, life-changing, history-making events. But nothing in the history of the world even comes close to the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

You see, Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh. He claimed to come to pay the penalty for sin, conquer sin, conquer Satan, conquer death, and conquer Hell. The resurrection proved that His claim was accurate. The resurrection by the power of God, the Father, was also the affirmation of God, that the work of Christ was done.

In fact, in Romans 1:4, the Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. There can be no question about deity of Jesus Christ when you look at the resurrection. There can be no question about whether or not He accomplished

His work of paying the penalty for sin, conquering sin, Satan, death, and Hell, when you look at the resurrection. It verifies everything.

In Romans 4, we read in Verses 24 and 25, this summation. It says, "God raised Jesus, our Lord, from the dead, He, who was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification." In other words, God raised Him, not only to attest that He was the Son of God in human flesh, but that He had perfectly accomplished the work of salvation.

His resurrection is also the guarantee of our resurrection. In 2 Corinthians 4:14, the Scripture says, "He, who raised the Lord Jesus, will raise us also." Summing those things up, the resurrection proves that He was God. It proves that He finished his work. And it guarantees our own resurrection. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus is mentioned at least 104 times in the New Testament. And there is one entire chapter devoted to the significance of the resurrection, and it a long chapter, namely 1 Corinthians 15. It deals with the historicity of the resurrection, the facts of the resurrection, and the immense and far-reaching and eternal implications of the resurrection.

It is then, unarguably, the single-greatest event in history. To those who believe, it, of course, becomes the source of their hope. And you remember the promise of Jesus to the grieving people who stood beside the grave of their beloved brother, Lazarus. And Jesus, knowing that He would raise Lazarus from the dead by the very power of resurrection, said this, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Do you believe this? And thus, in resurrection, power is the hope of eternal life. Now the resurrection is recorded in each of the four Gospels, each writer looking at the resurrection from a unique perspective, with different details, different purposes in mind, viewing the very same event. And when you put all four together, you get the composite record of this momentous and marvelous miracle.

Matthew has a most-fascinating look at it. He centers his look at the resurrection in the feelings and attitudes of a group of women. How interesting? They are central to Matthew's account. Even Jesus is not central in Matthew's account, although obviously, He is the focus of attention of the women. Instead of focusing on, for example, how Jesus was raised from the dead, or what happened when He raised from the dead, or how He got out of the grave clothes, or how He got out of the tomb, or what He was doing when He was moving around and they saw Him. He focuses, rather on Jesus, on the women.

Instead of focusing on the men, who were the apostles and their interaction with the risen Christ, He focuses on the women and particularly, on their attitudes and on their feelings. And so we get in this view of the resurrection, their responses to this great event.

Let's look at the setting in Verse 1. Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, that's the setting. It was the day after Sabbath, and He was buried the day before Sabbath. He was buried at the end of the day on Friday, was in the grave all day Saturday, and came out on the third day, which was Sunday, the day after Sabbath, Sabbath being Saturday. This is then the third day after His burial. He, Himself said, He would be in the grave three days. And indeed, He was.

And so, as dawn begins to arrive, announcing the first day of the week, we enter into the resurrection from the perspective of the women. Verse 1 says, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave." And by the way, Mark adds that a woman named Salome came, the mother of James and John, the apostles, and the wife of Zebedee. Luke adds that another woman named Joanna came, the wife of Chuzar, who was a steward in Herod's court.

John mentions only Mary Magdalene, but implies the others by using the pronoun, "we." So there was a group of women here, women who, by the way, had come all the way from Galilee where they lived, all the way down to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. They had ministered alongside Jesus during His ministry in Galilee. They had come all the way down to the Passover.

They were there at the cross when He was dying, while most of the disciples were scattered, and only John remained at the foot of the cross. The women were there demonstrating their great love and their great courage. The rest of the apostles didn't show up at the cross, or for that matter, at the burial. But the women were there. They were there at the burial attending to His body and putting some spices on it, knowing the decay that was going to come about.

Since the Jews did not embalm, they wanted to do as much as they could to care for the one they loved so greatly. There were there at his burial. And some of them, apparently, lingered past the darkness on Friday night, in grieving love, standing opposite the tomb, as Verse 61 of Chapter 27 says.

Now they're back. It's nearly dawn on Sunday. They must have started out when it was dark. And by the time they arrived, the light is just beginning to break. It is morning and they've come to look at the grave. They didn't come to see a resurrection. They just came to look.

They just wanted to make sure everything was still okay. Now you remember they had purchased spices the night before. Mark tells us that in his Gospel. And they waited 'till the Sabbath was over to come back for one final anointing. Their desire was to refresh the decaying body of Jesus, which would be in serious state of decay now, the third day.

The anointing on Friday, though profuse, would be affected by the decay, and they wanted to express one more act of sympathy. And so the first emotion we see is sympathy. That's the first resurrection attitude that we see in these women, sympathy. They came, not in great faith that they would see a resurrection. They didn't come even in weak faith, hoping they would see a resurrection. They just came to make one more effort at honoring the body of their Lord, one more act of sympathy.

And you remember in the case of Lazarus, who being in the grave for four days, would be in a serious state of decay, which was noted when one of his sisters commented by saying, "By this time, his body stinketh." And at that point, it would be too late to do much prevention. They came, knowing it was only the third day, and early that third day, and wanting to express an act of compassion.

And Mark tells us in Chapter 16, Verse 3, as he looks at it that they had no idea the tomb had been closed and a stone had been rolled across. And they had no idea that it had been sealed by the Romans. And they, therefore, had no idea that they would be unable to go in. And I suppose they thought that if they had to do something, they could find somebody who would push the stone away.

In fact, they said, "Who will roll the stone away for us? It's so large. We really can't move it." They would need the strength of a man. So the first emotion that you see with these women as they look at the event of the resurrection is that of sympathy, loving compassion toward Jesus.

Frankly, they should have been coming to see a resurrection because He told them there would be one. And if they had believed the Lord, they would have come in that anticipation. They would have understood His promise. And by the way, they had seen Him raise Lazarus from the dead. So it wasn't a question of whether or not He had the power, it's just hard to believe that, even though you've seen one.

What they did lack in faith, they certainly made up for in courage and in sympathy in comparison to the rest of the disciples. And so we see their sympathy. Sympathy doesn't last too long. It turns to a second emotion, fear, or terror. And Matthew alone gives us these details. Verse 2, "And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred. For an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it."

While they were on their way, wondering how they were gonna get in, and if, indeed, the stone had been rolled across the entrance, how it was going to be removed, an angel had already done it. "Behold," again, emphasizes the startling character of this event, "there was a great earthquake." Though still approach the garden where the tomb was located in proximity to Golgotha, where Jesus had been crucified, they must have felt the seismic waves rumble through the earth. And by the way, earthquakes are common in Israel. It's kind of like California.

They must have felt those radiating waves rolling beneath their feet as they moved toward the epicenter, which was the tomb. And here was another supernatural earthquake, a severe one, a "mega," in the Greek. What caused the earthquake? An angel of the Lord descended from Heaven. This earthquake was, by the way, not caused by Jesus leaving the tomb. It was not caused by Jesus leaving the grave.

It was caused by the arrival of the angel -- listen -- to open the tomb to show that Jesus was already gone. Nothing says that the angel let Him out. The angel didn't roll the stone away to let Him out. The angel rolled the stone away to let people in. By the time the angel came and hit the tomb and created a supernatural earthquake, the Lord was already gone. He had already risen. He had already left.

The angel just opened the tomb to let the people in. No one saw the resurrection. No one was an eyewitness to the event itself. Every once in a while, I'll see a picture, supposedly depicting the resurrection, and the stone is rolled away and the Lord is emerging. There's nothing in the Scripture to indicate that that is correct.

He seems to have left the grave in glorified form before the angel moved the stone at all. You remember that it isn't long after this, matter of just a week, He came into the room where the disciples were gathered, the door being, what? Shut. He doesn't need open doors to go in and out.

Jesus had already left behind the linen clothes lying exactly, without being displaced or disturbed, as they were when they were wrapped around His body. He came right out of those clothes without even distressing or disturbing them at all, and right through the walls of that tomb, without the stone being removed. He came forth in glorified form, seen only by God, and perhaps, the holy angels.

Then the angel came, then the earthquake. The stone is rolled back and it is set aside, in some manner, flatly on the ground so that the angel can sit on it. And there sits the Heavenly witness to the resurrection to greet the women as they arrive. What an amazing scene. What an amazing scene.

Think about the Jews. The Jewish leaders must have been thrilled, because all day on the Sabbath, they knew Jesus was in the grave. The one who had for three years been such an immense problem to them, the one who has so consistently confronted their hypocrisy, the one who had convinced many people that they were fakes and frauds and the agents of Satan, and not God, was incarcerated in a tomb. But little did they know that their efforts would only increase His influence.

Well, when the women arrived, in Verse 3, they would have seen an angel sitting on the stone. "His appearance was like lightening; his garment as white as snow." Supernatural brilliance adorns this angel. Divine glory is translated from His holy person, not unlike the transfiguration of Jesus, which Matthew describes in Chapter 17. This angel takes on the character of deity, manifesting the very

glory of God through His holy person, "His raiment as white as snow," speaking of His holiness and His purity.

"And the Roman guards," Verse 4 says, "shook for fear of Him and became like dead men." They were shaking. By the way, the same root word as the word "earthquake," the root is "seism," from which we get seismic. The earth quaked, and so did the guards. "And they became like dead men."

What does that mean? They went into a coma. They became comatose. They were paralyzed in unconsciousness by the sheer fright. It scared them into a coma. It was so frightening that their entire system went instantly into shock. This is not an unfamiliar scenario. It happened to Ezekiel when he had a vision of God. It happens in the Book of Revelation to John when he sees the glorified Christ.

It happened to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of transfiguration. They went into an immediate coma because their body literally went into shock at the fear of seeing the glory of God manifest. And that's what they saw in the case of this angel as he reflected the glory of God and they went into an instant coma.

Verse 5, "The angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid.'" Obviously, the women were in terror. It's remarkable, and I suppose, it's the purposes of God that they didn't go into a coma, too. The scene was absolutely paralyzing. But the Lord had a purpose for preventing them from going into total shock. Though they were certainly in a condition of terror, or the angel wouldn't say to them, "Do not be afraid," or, "Stop fearing. Fear not."

Now by this time, Mary Magdalene has gone. We know that from the other Gospel accounts. But the rest of the women are still there. Mary Magdalene got a glimpse of this thing and she was gone. She was on her way to find Peter and John to investigate what she assumed was foul play.

Meanwhile, the rest of the women stay and the angel calms the fears of these wonderful ladies. Nobody calmed the fears of the soldiers. Nobody said any comforting words to them. But to those who loved the Lord, there was comfort coming from an angel, who from Hebrews 1:14, we know, are sent to minister to the saints. And they certainly did on this occasion.

The angel knows who they are. Believe me; the angel of the Lord knows who belongs to God. And so the angel says, "I know you're looking for Jesus who was crucified, who has been crucified." And that's true. They did come expecting to find His dead body, expecting to put some more spices on it. They thought of Jesus only as, "The one who has been crucified, the one who is now dead." They really didn't understand the promise. They didn't believe the promise of resurrection. They loved Him so much they just came out of sympathy.

We might have expected, and I suppose it would be fair, we might have expected the angel to just say to them, "You know, you're a rather faithless bunch. Here you are coming expecting to find a dead body, when Jesus, Himself, promised that He would be raised from the dead." We might expect a rebuke by an angel to condemn their feeble minds and their feeble faith.

But to these loyal, loving, sympathetic, compassionate women whose devotion to Christ is so clear there is no rebuke, there is only comfort, and the comfort comes in Verse 6, "He is not here, for He has risen." Literally, an eras tense, He was raised. He was raised by his own power. John 10:18, "By the power of the Father." Romans 8:11, "By the power of the spirit." The whole Trinity is involved in the resurrection. "He is not here for He has risen." And then there is this direct confrontational statement, "Just as He said," reminding them that He had indeed promised it.

And Luke 24:8 says, "When the angle said that, they remembered Jesus' words." It was a terrorizing moment until the angel calmed their fearful hearts and prevented them from going into shock like the soldiers, by saying, "He has risen, just as He said."

And then the glorious evidence, Verse 6, "Come, see the place where He was lying." Luke tells us that the women went into the tomb and the same angel appeared on the inside and gave them again, the same message. I suppose twice, to emphasize the incredible reality that was so stunning and shocking to them.

The message didn't come easily to their startled minds. And so the angel went on the inside to repeat it. And by the way, Luke adds another interesting note that on the inside the first angel, the angel who spoke, was joined by a second angel, also in shining clothes.

And John adds, in Chapter 20, that one of them was at one end of the place her Jesus lay, and the other at the other; one at the feet and one at the head. And there, they were like the cherubim who covered both sides of the Mercy Seat, signifying indeed, that He had been supernaturally raised from the dead.

And then in Verse 7, the angel says, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead. And behold, He is going before you into Galilee. There you will see Him. Behold, I've told you." The first angel concludes this encounter with a command, a very specific and exact command, "Go tell the disciples He is risen and He's going before you into Galilee where you're going to see Him." That's the message.

In fact, Mark records the same message and adds, "Go tell His disciples and Peter. And say He is going before you into Galilee. There you will see Him just as He said to you." And then Mark adds this, "And they went out and ran from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them.

And they said nothing to anyone for, they were terrified."

Fear, terror at what they had just seen. And they went away and were speechless in their terror. But they had this command. And fascination and fear eventually gave way to proclamation. Finally, they did speak, but it took them a while. At this point, it strikes me that we might want to ask the question, "Why would Jesus choose to involve these women? Why would He choose these women to be the first witnesses that the resurrection had happened? Why not the disciples? Why not Peter, James, and John, who were the leading disciples?"

And I suppose you could make a little list of why He chose these women. And the first part of the list might be, "Because God likes to choose the weak over the strong. Or God rewards those who are most faithful, and the women were more faithful during the time of Jesus' suffering than the apostles were." Or someone might suggest, after all, death came by a woman in the garden. And now life is announced, first of all, to women.

Or someone might say that women seem to carry the deepest sorrow, and the deepest sorrow deserves the highest joy. And maybe God gave them the joy because they had known the sorrow. And perhaps we might say supreme love deserves supreme blessing. All of that is possible in answering the question, "Why did the resurrection first come to women?"

But I'll give you even a better reason. They were there. *(Laughter)* Not too profound. *(Laughter)* The reason they were the first witnesses to the resurrection was because they were there. That's a great spiritual truth. God uses and blesses the people who are there. If the 11 had been there that morning, they would have experienced this initial incredible miracle. They were there.

And the angel said, "Now you have to go. You have to tell the disciples that He's going to meet you in Galilee and there you'll see Him. Galilee will be the place where Jesus risen from the dead, will meet all of His disciples." And that's exactly the way it happened.

Back in Chapter 26 Jesus had told them He was going to be betrayed and executed. But in Verse 32 of Matthew 26, He said, "After I have been raised, I'll go before you to Galilee." The meeting place is Galilee. Why Galilee? Why is that the place? Galilee of the nations? Galilee, which unlike Jerusalem, was populated with so many Gentiles. Galilee, which was so unsophisticated. Galilee, which was so rural and uneducated and unrefined. Galilee, which was a melting pot of people from all over the world. Galilee, where the Lord first ministered and performed His miracles and redeemed souls and was first hated and rejected. Galilee, the microcosm of the world?

In that place, that's where He would see them all. That's where He would give them the great commission to reach the world. Galilee, Galilee where it all started. It wouldn't be to the elite leadership in Jerusalem. It would be to the trained theologians. It would be Galilee.

The greatest number of Disciples of Christ, those who loved Him and followed Him and believed Him were in Galilee anyway. It would be in Galilee that all the believers would gather to see Him for the sending out, the commission to reach the whole world with the Gospel.

This doesn't in any way, by the way, deny that Jesus met with his disciples on several occasions in Jerusalem after the resurrection, before that gathering in Galilee. Indeed, He did. He met them on that Sunday afternoon of His resurrection. He met them, according to John's Gospel, on the Sunday evening. And a week later met them again on the following Sunday evening, according to John 20.

So there were several occasions when He met with them in Jerusalem. But it was the 11. It wasn't until Galilee that the whole group was gathered together. And that's where we find the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 describing that event when he says that after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "He appeared," Verse 6, "to more than 500 brethren at one time." That was the meeting in Galilee.

Every meeting in Jerusalem was a small meeting in preparation for the great assembly in Galilee where most of the believers lived. The angel then seals this command with its promise that the Lord would meet them in Galilee with a word of divine authority when he says, "I have told you. You have your orders."

Just a note, I told you that Mark adds that the angel said, "And tell Peter especially." That's a marvelous touch, because it was Peter who was most vociferous in his denial of Jesus Christ. What grace and what forgiveness. So with that command, they left. They were speechless. They left with terror, astonishment, trembling, and amazement. But as they went, that began to be mingled with a new emotion. And that's the third emotion that Matthew focuses on in Verse 8.

"And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear" -- and the transition begins -- "and great joy, and ran to report to His disciples." Their silence turned to proclamation. Their fear turned to joy. Joy is the third emotion. The main verb says, "They ran." They ran to reach the disciples. First in fear and shock, and as the reality began to settle, then in joy.

Now the rest of the disciples, by the way, were not with Peter and John, because Peter and John were on their way to the tomb with Mary Magdalene, who having seen the tomb, had hurried away before this whole scene unfolded, to tell them that somebody had stolen the Body, and here come Peter and John. So they're not there at the first meeting when they reported to the disciples Jesus' resurrection.

It's enough to know that the reality of it has settled in their hearts and they're filled with joy. They are believers now. The evidence is overwhelming as it begins to sink into their mind, and the shock

begins to dispel itself a bit. They now have this clear vision of this blazing angel, these two blazing angels sitting on either end of the slab where the Body was lying, the grave clothes unruffled and unmoved as if He had come through them, for indeed, he has. He isn't there. He is alive. The supernatural message has reached their hearts and they are in a hurry to let the disciple know.

Joy is the expression of faith. They believed. And it's important to note that because they came not believing. Initially, they came purely out of sympathy. And the next emotion was terror. But even in their terror and unbelief and fear, even though they must have been shaking like the ground shook, even though they must have been on the brink of pure shock, even though they had not expected a resurrection, they came to believe it. The evidence was overwhelming. It overrode their emotions. It overrode their fears. They were convinced.

This is an important apologetic for the resurrection, because you have to remember, these are not people coming expecting a resurrection. These are people coming who don't expect a resurrection, and leaving convinced that one occurred.

Their joy, then, turns to a fourth emotion, and that's the motion of worship, the expression of worship. An amazing thing happens as they're running to the disciples. Verse 9, "And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them," literally said, "Hello." If He were saying it in our vernacular, He would meet them and say, "Hi." (*Laughter*)

Perhaps they were headed to Bethany. Maybe the disciples were there. 'Bout a two-mile walk or run. And Jesus met them. And he met them in resurrection glory. And He permitted them to recognize Him. And they knew He was their Lord, alive from the dead. And they knew there had to be a resurrection. Remember, these are the ladies who had put the spices on the corpse. These are the ladies who'd wrapped that dead body. They knew. They knew.

And He gave them the common greeting, "Kirote." Now the old authorized says, "All hail." It means, "Hello, hi, good morning," just a very common, normal everyday greeting, the ordinary salutation of the marketplace, the highway, and the home. Three He was, the King of Kings, the Glorious Lord, out of the grave and He speaks to them as their friend.

They knew and they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. This is no spirit. This is not apparition. This is no phantom. This is no figment of their imagination. This is a living, bodily-resurrected Christ. And they grasped His feet. And Matthew wants you to know that. "He had feet and they held onto them."

"They seized His feet with adoring love," like a person who recognized sovereign king would come up and bow before his feet, and perhaps even kiss his feet. In ancient times, they fell at His feet in the symbol of homage, overwhelmed with thanks, overwhelmed with wonder. They fell at His feet and

worshiped Him.

There must have been outpouring of praise, and outpouring of gratitude and thanksgiving and joy that is indescribable. I wish there were a few more verses describing it. It just says, "They worshiped Him." "Proskenu," to offer homage, or worship. And would you please notice that He accepted it? He accepted it.

In the Book of Revelation, John tried to worship an angel and an angel said, "Stop that. Worship God." Jesus accepted it. You remember the words of the Apostle Paul, who in speaking of the humiliation of Jesus, in Philippians 2, said that Jesus was humbled to the point of death, even the death on the cross. But he said then, speaking of the resurrection, "God also highly exalted Him, bestowing on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow." And these knees bowed at the resurrected Christ. They're convinced, and they worshiped Him.

Then Jesus said in Verse 10, "Don't be afraid. Kill the last vestiges of fear. Go and take My brethren, the Word, to leave for Galilee and there you'll see Me." So the emotions and the attitudes of those women demonstrated how anyone should approach the resurrection. This is almost a normal pattern. Anyone approaching this tremendous event would come, first of all, with sympathy, sympathy for the excruciating, agonizing suffering that Jesus endured on the cross, and the terrible, undeserved death which He died.

You should approach this monumental time in the life of Christ with sympathy for the cross. And anyone would approach as well, this open tomb and a blazing angel, with fear, a fear of supernatural power. And when the reality of resurrection dawns, that fear would turn to joy. And upon a firsthand meeting with the risen Christ, it would turn to worship.

That's how it is. That's the process. It's not enough to come to the cross with sympathy. It's not enough to come to the open tomb being startled and astonished and amazed. It's not really enough, really, even to rejoice over this great event. Lots of people do. It demands worship, that you fall on your face at the feet of Jesus Christ and embrace Him as Savior and Lord and King.

And by the way, the evidence of His resurrection is overwhelming. The tomb was empty and He was gone. The grave clothes were undisturbed. The whole Roman guard was in a coma. The testimony of angels, holy angels, and now, the testimony of some women who came expecting anything but this, and were so absolutely convinced.

How conclusive is the evidence for Christ's resurrection? A lawyer by the name of Sir Edward Clark wrote, "As a lawyer, I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. To me, the evidence is conclusive. And over and over again in the high court, I have secured

the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. Inference follows on evidence. And a truthful witness is always artless and disdains effect.

"The Gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class. And as a lawyer, I accept it unreservedly, as the testimony of truthful people to facts they were able to substantiate," end quote.

Professor Thomas Arnold, the author of the famous three-volume history of Roman, and an appointee to the chair of modern history at Oxford University in England writes, and I quote, "The evidence for our Lord's life and resurrection may be, and often has been, shown to be satisfactory. It is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through every element of it, piece by piece, as carefully as every judge summing up a most-important case.

"I have, myself, done it many times over, not to persuade others, but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them. And I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence than the great sign which God had given us that Christ died and rose from the dead," end quote.

Charles Hodge, the brilliant theologian says in reference to the resurrection, "It is the best authenticated event in ancient history," end quote. Why? Because of massive evidence from eyewitnesses. Well, armed with firsthand evidence and personal audience with the Risen Lord, they had a new emotion, a brand new emotion.

And that emotion, I think, can be seen in Verse 10, or felt in Verse 10, and it's hope. And Jesus said it, "And don't be afraid. Go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee and there they shall see Me." The last vestiges of fear are gone and hope is alive because Christ is alive. "Stop being afraid. Go tell My brethren. Get up to Galilee. I'm gonna meet you there. Hope is alive. Hope is alive."

We're all gonna see Him again in Galilee. And so we view the resurrection in this way. And it is precisely how the resurrection is to be viewed. When you fall at His feet and you embrace Him as the Risen Lord, your heart is filled with hope, because if He lives, you shall live also. Everything depends upon the resurrection.

Because He rose from the dead, we know the Word of God is true, because it promised His resurrection. Because He rose from the dead, we know that He is God in human flesh, who demonstrated His deity and power over death. Because He rose from the dead, we know that salvation is complete. He has conquered death and sin.

Because He rose from the dead, we know that we have eternal life. We know that we have forgiveness of sins. We know that we have an interceding high priest. We know that the Holy Spirit was sent, that we have been granted spiritual power. Because He rose from the dead, we know that He can build His church. Because He rose from the dead, we know that judgment is coming on the ungodly, and a time of rewards for His own. Because He rose from the dead, we know that we shall rise and Heaven waits for us.

The emotion of the women ended in hope. And that is the culminating emotion for anyone who understands the resurrection. I trusted it's yours. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, our hearts rejoice in the greatness of this monumental event. Everything in our salvation hinges on this. He was raised for our justification, to make us right with You. Oh Lord, move us through these same emotions, beyond sympathy, beyond fear, beyond joy, all the way to worship, and finally, to hope, a hope which is an anchor to the soul, a hope which enables us to look death in the face with the anticipation that it's not the end, it's only the beginning.

It's not a going alone. It's a going in the divine companionship of the Son of God. It's not an entrance into darkness, but into light. It's not the end of joy, but the beginning of it. Father, give us hope, hope because Jesus lives. And because He lives, so shall all who are His. We thank You for the promise that Jesus made to You, the Father, when He said, "I will lose none of Mine, but raise them up at the last day." It's in that hope that we live and face life and death in the confidence that whoever believes in Christ will never die.

We thank You for our great hope in a Risen Christ. And we give Him all the glory and all the honor, Amen.

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