

The Life-Transforming Truth of the Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Now, if you have your Bible on paper or on a device, perhaps you can look it up as we think together about Matthew chapter 28 and the life-transforming truth of the resurrection.

I wonder when was the last time you discovered a truth that changed your life? This week I was thinking about that moment of becoming a parent, and some of us remember this well. You know, it's one thing to discover you're pregnant, and that's massive, but as soon as the baby or babies are born, instantly everything changes. You have a new identity and you have a new task, a new truth that changes life forever. In some ways, the reality of pandemic has been one of those life-changing truths. Think about it, for example, from the scientific community, so many involved working night and day on that vaccine program because the truth of that dreadful virus has led them to all those incredible efforts to develop that vaccine, and we're so thankful for that because that's in part why we're able to meet again today. And now that the truth, the reality of those vaccines are beginning to change society little by little, and we continue to pray for mercy as that goes on. Well, when we come to Easter, we are coming to the greatest of all truths.

The Bible calls it gospel, good news, and for good reason. That word gospel was used, for example, if the Roman emperor had won some great victory or if he had had a new son born to him. This is news that changes the empire. This is news that shapes history. Well, the truth at the center of Christianity is that Jesus, the Son of God, has become one of us and has died in our place for our sins, and now he has risen in glory. And so, what we're going to do today is we're going to explore together that one great truth, the truth of the resurrection. We're going to consider briefly why some choose instead the great lie that we see in our middle section before recognizing the one great task given to God's church because we have a risen Lord Jesus. So, let's look together at this wonderful section of God's Word.

So, in the first ten verses, we can think about one great truth. And to focus our minds, read with me in verse six again, where the angel declares, he, that is Jesus, is not here. He has risen just as he said.

So, the resurrection was promised by Jesus, was actually still, even though he had told them repeatedly unexpected among his people, but now it has been announced that it has happened.

[3 : 23] Before we get to the actual resurrection appearance, we can see some signs that anticipate showing God is at work. Have a look with me at verses two to four. I think we can see three signs that God is at work. Perhaps, boys and girls, you can see them with me. First of all, there is a violent earthquake, a reminder that the powerful Creator God is present and has been working in resurrection power, raising his Son. And then there is the messenger from God. There is the angel of the Lord. And as is typical, that angel, when he is present, provokes fear among the guards.

And then the third evidence of the work of God is that the stone has been rolled away. Of course, not rolled away to let Jesus out. He has already risen. Rolled away to let the women into that great truth of the resurrection. So, there are those signs that happen. And next comes the message declared by the angel to these women. Verses five to seven. What do you notice? First, there is the words, do not be afraid. That was a natural reaction, wasn't it, to angels in the Bible, in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, when people meet angels, there's fear. But also, I think this reflects the feelings of these women and the first disciples. They've seen their king die. They feel hopeless and despair and a sense of fear. The angel goes on to say, you are in the wrong place, because they're looking for a dead Jesus in the place of the dead. And they're told he's not here. He has risen. The tomb is not where he belongs. Death had no claim on Jesus. Jesus has won victory over death. He has been raised, the angels declare, by the power of God. This wonderful miracle at the center of our faith.

And they're told also that he has risen just as he said. Jesus has kept his word. We know and we read the Gospels that each of them has a number of times where Jesus prophesies, where Jesus predicts his suffering, his death, his resurrection. But we appreciate the honesty of the Gospel writers as they show us that the women and the disciples, they're unable to believe it until after the events. This is not something anyone is necessarily expecting, even though Jesus has told them to expect it.

And they notice a really significant part of the angel's message to the women. They are to share the good news. What they told in verse 7, go quickly and tell his disciples. This history transforming news is too good for them to keep to themselves. The disciples have to be told too that Jesus has kept his promise that that relationship they have with the Lord Jesus has been restored as Jesus is restored to life in his resurrection body. And then moving from that announcement and from the signs, we get the wonderful final decisive confirmation, the proof of what's been announced as they meet with Jesus. Verse 8, we see again their mix of emotions. The women hurry from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy on their way to be obedient to tell the disciples. And then what happens in verse 9?

Suddenly, Jesus met them. Can you imagine? Can we put ourselves in their shoes and imagine that sense of joy and wonder to have their friend, their king, their savior, the one they loved, the one they hoped in back from the dead?

[7 : 49] And Jesus repeats the message of the angels, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me. And you notice the obvious comfort that Jesus wants to bring to the disciples.

He calls them his brothers. They have abandoned Jesus in his hour of need. Peter has even denied knowing Jesus. And yet Jesus is not ashamed, as Hebrews says, to call them brothers. Talk about a dream come true.

Now we talk about, don't we, those moments, you know, where were you when? You know, those significant moments in history. Some of us, we could answer the question, where were you when people first landed on the moon?

Many of us will remember where we were when we heard the news of the Twin Towers falling. Well, imagine these women, where were you when the events of Easter were declared? We were right there.

Here are these first eyewitnesses who saw the empty tomb, who heard the words of the angels, and who met and worshipped the risen Lord Jesus. They would never forget this. And as they told these words to those writing the gospels, they would have been as fresh as the day it happened.

[9 : 16] Now let's focus for a few minutes on the significance of these events for us as the church, for us as Christians, if you're a Christian here today. Three things to recognize.

First of all, in Jesus' words, in verse 9, or His word, suddenly Jesus met them. Greetings, He said. Let's think about fellowship for a moment. In this simple yet profound greeting, we understand that because Jesus has risen from the dead, we enjoy welcome and fellowship from and with the living Lord Jesus. The events of Easter say to us powerfully, here is the one love, here is the one friendship you can never lose. Here is a love beyond and through even death.

And there's such wonderful hope and promise in that fellowship. Think too about the response of the women and the significance of our worship in light of the resurrection. What do the women do? They came to Jesus, clasped His feet and worshipped Him. They bow to the ground and clasp His feet to say, Jesus, You are our King. And they worship Him as Lord, as God, as Saviour. For us as the church, the cross and the resurrection represent for us the King who comes to save us.

[11 : 10] by dying in our place for us by dying in our place for our sins. The Lord who becomes one of us to rescue and represent and redeem us. And in that light, worship and loyalty and honor to this Jesus then are the only proper responses to the Lord who comes to the Lord who comes to the Lord who comes to the Lord who comes to the Lord.

And then think about our mission in light of what they are told by Jesus. Go and tell. this is actually the Last Master of verification, which is our Today Search Vestery Enter.

So,inder is...either Am isa of this journal, as the risen Territish or fasting oats, as King of the uer Hex. W verrallis...we have the one great truth that the world needs. And so from this one great truth comes our one great task, as we'll think about in a few moments.

But what about if you're here today and you're not a Christian, or if you're tuning in and you're not a Christian, what does this truth, what does Easter say to you in that case? Well, hear the events of

Easter as an invitation.

Here is Jesus, the Savior of the world, promising unbreakable friendship with God. Think about that, the loneliness we're experiencing right now.

[12 : 46] Here is one friendship we will never lose. Here, too, is a proper center for your worship. We all make something of central importance in our lives.

Something we look to to give us hope and a foundation and our security. The Bible calls that idolatry, our idols. Well, here we are reminded that Jesus is the proper center for our life and for our worship.

And here, too, in Jesus, there is an offer of forgiveness. Beyond our sin, beyond our failure, beyond our rejection.

It's true for the disciples who abandoned Jesus. It's true for us, if we will put our trust in Jesus, that we can know forgiveness and peace with God through him.

So, let me invite you to take that invitation and to trust in Jesus. So, that's one great truth that the women discovered.

[13 : 54] But we see also, in verse 11 to 15, one great lie. Perhaps you remember from a number of years ago, Al Gore, one time Vice President of the United States, was heading up a documentary called An Inconvenient Truth.

If you haven't seen it, it was a warning on global warming. And why is it called an inconvenient truth? Well, in part because, especially for us in Western developed nations, in a globalized world, to deal with the problems of the planet will interfere with lifestyles.

It will have to bring cost for governments and for families. So, there's a level of inconvenience connected to the truth and the danger.

Consider the religious leaders of verses 11 to 15. What's going on here as they cook up their story? The resurrection is their inconvenient truth that they do not want to face up to, that they do not want to consider because they do not want Jesus as their Messiah.

So, they turn to bribery and they turn to lies rather than responding to the evidence of the resurrection. They know from the soldiers there has been an earthquake.

[15 : 27] They know from the soldiers that an angel has appeared to them. They know from the soldiers that the tomb is empty. Jesus is not there, but they are blinded by prejudice and hate.

And so, we read in verse 12, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, you are to say, his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.

Confronted with the truth, they choose the lie. Their eyes, their minds, their hearts closed to the reality of Jesus as risen Lord and Savior.

And I think a question that then follows for each one of us is, what is it that stops us from following the evidence?

What is it that stops you from responding to the risen Lord Jesus, especially perhaps if you're not a Christian? What are those barriers that stop you from considering?

[16 : 36] Because look at the evidence that Matthew presents for us. Six blocks of evidence that we can see here that point to the truth and towards the significance of the resurrection.

Let's look at these very briefly. First of all, first eyewitnesses are women. And we know in Jesus' day, women had very low status. Their testimony not recognized in court. So, this isn't something that has been created, not a story made up, because it would not be well received unless it were true.

Think about the evidence of the empty tomb. Here you have the power of the religious leaders, the power of the Roman Empire, but neither of them are able to present a dead body, to dispel the news that Jesus has risen.

There is no better explanation provided than Jesus has actually risen from the tomb, and that's why it is empty. We have the evidence of the resurrection appearances.

Matthew records two for us, but there are many more recorded in the Gospels. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 records numerous eyewitness accounts of people having met with the risen Lord Jesus.

[17 : 56] And these are not myths. This is eyewitness history written down just a few short years after the events. People are named so questions could be asked.

The Gospel writers were confident in their history and their reliability. We can think about the transformed lives that we see in the first followers of Jesus.

We've already kind of alluded in that direction. The hopeless, fearful women and disciples become courageous and joyful and willing to do anything and to risk everything for Jesus when they know He is risen as He promised.

We have the evidence of fulfilled prophecy. Remember the angels said Jesus has risen just as He said. We hear Jesus in His ministry repeatedly declare that He will suffer, die, and rise.

And then there is the reality of world mission. Again, these first disciples are told to go and take this message to the nations.

[19 : 04] How do we account for the existence and the spread of the global church apart from the truth that Jesus has been raised from the dead? How do we account for the world?

Back to our question. Today, is this your inconvenient truth? Are we trying to evade the reality that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus is Savior?

Perhaps, like these religious leaders, we want life on our terms. We don't want to deal with Jesus as He claims to be. Well, the reality that we find on this first Easter Sunday is that Jesus is risen, and this is a truth both too big to ignore and too good to miss.

Paul, shortly after this, will announce in Acts chapter 17 in Athens that the Bible says that Jesus is risen, that the Jesus who is risen will be the same Jesus who will judge each and every person who has ever lived.

And the Bible reminds us then that the risen Lord Jesus means there is an urgent and an eternal need to respond to this Jesus, to consider the evidence that we find in the Bible, to consider the person and the work and the life and the love of Jesus.

[20 : 35] Again, if you're here or if you're at home and you're not a Christian, let me encourage you to talk to a Christian friend or a family member, to read one of the Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew or Mark.

It's a reminder that we need to humble ourselves to see how much we need Jesus, to recognize the reality of sin and our inability to please God.

We need to recognize His Lordship, to submit to His loving rule, not just to some parts of life, but all of life, to the glory of the risen Lord Jesus.

And for those of us who are Christians, and this is part of our mission, we are to pray for those who we love, those who we care for, that those barriers of resistance would be broken down, that we would see men and women and boys and girls come to know and discover this life-changing truth. And that takes us towards the one great task that we have here in verses 16 and 20. Now, back when I was working in Glasgow, one of the jobs I had was to be an honorary chaplain at Glasgow University, which meant every summer and winter, I got to take part in the graduation ceremony.

[21 : 57] I never went to my own graduation. I got to go to lots of other people's, get dressed up, repeat a prayer in Latin, and be right at the front of the procession, which is a very surreal moment.

Well, my favorite part of that whole graduation process was just before the whole ceremony began, three janitors would arrive, and one of them would be chosen to be the head of the procession.

And so they would put a robe on him, and he'd carry this big, important sort of gold stick. And now he wasn't just a janitor, now he's representing the university, he's representing the principal.

When he walked into the graduation room and announced all rise, everybody recognized his authority. In that moment, transformed.

One great task, represent the principal. And people responded. I want us to think of verses 16 to 20 in those terms.

[23 : 04] Here we find the disciples meeting the risen Lord Jesus, and they are given a new task to represent Jesus, their Lord and Savior, to be his ambassadors, to speak for him and to represent his rule.

And that's been the calling and the task of the church ever since. This is the Great Commission as it's often known. I think it's important for us that we stop and reflect on who is it that's giving this commission.

Well, first of all, we're reminded in verse 17 that he is the physically resurrected Lord Jesus. Verse 17, when they saw him, and we discover too that he's worthy of worship.

They worshiped him, but some doubted. Here's a reminder that though Jesus had predicted it, people struggled to believe it.

We were reading at the breakfast table this morning, the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, that first Easter Sunday afternoon. And even as Jesus is talking with them, even as he is

explaining from the Bible that everything that happened, happened according to God's plans, they were slow of heart to believe.

[24 : 28] Some doubted. And then verse 18, Jesus said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Who's going to commission the disciples? The one who has been given all authority in the universe by his father in heaven, because he has done that work that he was sent to do.

So he commissions them three questions. What is their commission? Question, verse 19, therefore, go. Here is Jesus, the voice of authority, and he is commanding them to go as his ambassadors. He will shortly leave and return to heaven, but he promises to be present, and he sends the Spirit, and they are commissioned to speak in his name, to share the gospel, and to follow his methods. Loving, self-giving, sacrificial service. It's the way of the church. That's their commission. What's their command? Their command is to go and make disciples of all nations.

[25 : 42] As those who are committed to following the Lord Jesus, they are to draw to Jesus. Others who will be fully committed to honoring him, living for him as Lord, and not just from a small pocket, but from all nations of the world.

Crucial to this, notice there are two particular elements that Jesus draws attention to. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Baptizing. Baptizing. Think about how this plays out in the book of Acts. So we read a little bit of Peter's sermon, Pentecost, Acts chapter 2.

He preaches the gospel, doesn't he? He says, you know, Jesus is the Son of God. You put him to death, but God had a plan to achieve victory through him, and to bring forgiveness of sin through him, and to raise him from the dead in victory, and then he calls the people to repent and to believe, and those who believe the message, those who believe that Jesus is Lord, are baptized.

It's a sign that they have received saving grace. That washing is a sign that they are looking to Jesus as their hope for being washed from their sin, and it's a sign of them belonging to Jesus as Lord.

[27 : 05] So there's baptism and there's teaching. Those who have been saved by grace are then called to obey. And so the disciples and the church, then, we have to pass on the teaching of Jesus, pass on the way of life of Jesus, the way of love that Jesus showed.

That's the truth that we are called to obey. That's the truth that we are called to bring. And what's the comfort that Jesus offers on this new task for the church as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus? Verse 20, Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. We are never alone on Jesus' mission.

He never leaves us to go at ourselves. The powerful, loving, risen Lord Jesus is with and for his people always. So for us as a church, we have here both our marching orders and our promise and our comfort as we seek to be obedient to them.

Without Jesus, we can do nothing, but with Jesus, nothing is impossible. Here's this command and promise from our risen, ruling, redeeming Lord Jesus.

[28 : 34] And think about how we see the effectiveness of Jesus' promise and Jesus' command when we think about the global church. Think about the global church for a moment.

Think about those friends that we have, those mission partners that we have, those churches that we are aware of crossing every language and culture and nation of the earth. Think about millions of people worshipping Jesus today.

Some in vast cathedrals, some in prison cells, some outside, some in their homes, only, only because Jesus is alive.

Because the resurrection is the great truth that changes everything. It changed those women, it changed the disciples, and it still changes men and women and boys and girls today.

We are called, as God's people, to be ambassadors for Christ, to share this hope, to extend his love, to serve others, only because Jesus is alive.

[29 : 38] We are called to proclaim a gospel of amazing grace, of forgiveness of sins, of peace with God through Jesus. And we are called to urge people to trust and obey in a risen Lord Jesus.

And we are called to suffer and to serve and to live knowing comfort and hope from our risen and ruling Lord Jesus.

All of this is true because Jesus is alive. This is the gospel, the good news, the life-changing, life-transforming truth.

May that be our truth. May that be our hope and our joy this Easter. Let's pray together. Lord, our God, we are so thankful for the good news of our risen Lord Jesus.

and we pray that you would help us, whoever we are, wherever we are today, to be thinking about the significance, the evidence, the implications of the empty tomb, of Jesus speaking with and issuing commands to his followers.

[31 : 05] That we would find comfort from that promise that he is with his people always. We ask that you would make us faithful as a church in that mission that you call us to.

That we would be praying and serving so that the good news of Jesus would indeed keep spreading to all the nations of the earth, including ours.

Lord, we pray for any who are perhaps fearful and doubting, for any who as yet are not Christians, may you help them to recognize how good the good news of our risen Savior is.

And may they trust in him today. We pray these things so that Jesus would be glorified. Amen.

Now, as we finish, we will hear again from our friends at New Scottish Hymns as they lead us in singing.

We'll listen to Thine Be The Glory. Amen. Amen. Thine Be The Glory Risen Conquering Son
Endless is the victory Thou, O'er death, Thou, O'er death, Thou, O'er death, Thou, O'er death,
Angels in bright rain Roll the stone away Kept the folded grave clothes

[33 : 12] Where Thy body lay Thine Be The Glory Thine be The Glory Thine be The Glory Risen
Conquering Son Endless is the victory Thou, O'er death, Thou, O'er death, hath won Though Jesus
meets us Risen from the tomb Lovingly He greets us Scatters fear and gloom Let the church with
gladness Hymns of triumph sing For her Lord now liveth Death has lost its stain

Thine be the glory Risen conquering Son Endless is the victory Thou o'er death has won No more
we doubt Thee Glorious Prince of Life Life is not without Thee Aid us in our strife Make us more
than conquerors Through Thy deathless love Bring us safe through Jordan To Thy home above
Thine be the glory Risen conquering Son Endless is the victory Thou o'er death has won Thine be
the glory Risen conquering Son Endless is the victory Thou o'er death has won You stand with me
to receive the benediction from the end of number six. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord
make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give
you peace. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.