

Matthew 28:11–20

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[0 : 0 0] We're in verses 11 to the end of the book. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell people this, his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.

And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[1 : 0 2] And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Good morning.

Thank you for choosing to spend the Lord's Day here at Christ Church Chicago. We have a rogue heating unit. I was in the back and I said, shut down all units.

And that one apparently still wants to hum. So apologies for a warmer environment.

I'll be sweating, but I came prepared. Came prepared. Let's pray together. Father, we give you thanks for your word.

And now as we give ourselves to it, we ask that you would illumine it for us. That it would strengthen us to live lives that please you.

[2 : 1 0] Help us to that end, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. On May 7th, 1945, the front page of the San Francisco Examiner read, War is over in Europe!

Wall Street Journal, October 10th, 2010, after the rescue of 33 Chilean miners buried over 700 meters below the earth's floor for 69 days, they were extracted.

The front page of the Wall Street Journal read, Free at last. What would you consider to be good news? Possibly war is over.

Certainly, in our day, that would be appropriate, given what is unfolding, or what has unfolded in Ukraine and in Gaza. Perhaps it would be free at last.

For those trapped, what would you consider great news? Maybe the cure for seemingly incurable diseases was discovered.

[3 : 3 6] Alzheimer's, cancer, or Parkinson's. Would that be great news? Perhaps the eradication of all poverty, violence, racism.

If any of these occurred, the news would be broadcast, whether it be on television, newspapers, internet, social media, word of mouth. It would be blasted and broadcasted about the whole world. Why? Because great news is shared news. What about for you personally? Perhaps you've conceived after years of infertility.

That would be great news. Perhaps your grown adult child has come to faith after many, many years of rebellion. That would be great news.

Perhaps for some of you university students, after nine weeks of an agonizing course you have passed, that would be great news. For others, after months of job searching and submitting applications and receiving notice, that you have a job offer, that would be great news.

[4 : 5 1] If any of these things transpired in your personal life, you would share it. Why? Because great news is shared news. And this morning we re-enter the text in Matthew 28, following great

news.

It is actually the greatest news in all the world. The crucified Jesus of Nazareth, who was dead and buried, was now alive and appearing to people.

Death had met the eternal Son of God and was defeated. Death fought, but life won. It was the war of all wars.

And on that day, what should have read in the Jerusalem Post, the front page, should have read, victorious. The news was spreading.

The empty grave sends out people. And we saw last week a group emerge from the burial site, namely a group of women who had shown up to the tomb to be met by an angel and an empty tomb.

[5 : 52] And they are now on their way to Galilee. To tell the news of a risen Jesus. Because great news is shared news.

Now, as and as the women are making their way to Galilee, we find, we re-enter the text in verse 11. We find a group of guards, a troop of guards, who are heading back to Jerusalem with news.

They approach the chief priests, the religious elite, with the news. It's not completely clear what they reported, but they certainly share the news of an empty tomb.

The chief priests assemble the rest of the religious leaders and they come up with a plan. It is here that we peer behind the scenes of what I want to call my first point, the great cover-up.

The great cover-up. This is a biblical instance of fake news. The ploy is recorded for us here. Once again, money is at play.

[6 : 56] Thirty pieces of silver that betrayed Jesus. And another undisclosed amount is offered to conceal the news of the resurrection. A series of scams develops.

It's a lie. Then a bribe. Then another potential bribe. And finally, the cover-up. The cover-up story, however, is a bit far-fetched.

Firstly, it's reported that the soldiers are to say they fell asleep on the job. Now, to fall asleep on the job, in some cases, is just you're awoken by your boss to maybe a small word of disapproval.

But here, soldiers, often who fell asleep on a job as serious as this, could actually be punishable by death. The soldiers are to admit that they were incompetent and they fell asleep.

If Pilate hears of this, they would have been held accountable. Hence the promise of the religious leaders to say, if the governor hears about this, don't worry. We will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.

[8 : 01] Alluding to another bribe. The cover-up continues. It's the thought that some fearful disciples would muster up the courage to confront a guarded tomb in the middle of the night when they could not even muster enough courage to identify with Jesus during his crucifixion.

It's hardly imaginable. A feeble Peter with a fishing background was in no condition to fight a trained Roman soldier for the body of a friend. Thirdly, the cover-up compounds.

I'm unsure how the soldiers could actually have given an account of what happened while they were sleeping. When I'm asleep, what occurs in my home is entirely unbeknownst to me.

And here, the soldiers are to say, this is what happened while we were asleep. They stand up for a lie claiming they knew what had transpired.

Much of it is unsensible. It's not well reasoned. But that is the nature of the wicked human heart. Humanity would rather come up with some senseless explanation than concede their lives to the rule of God.

[9 : 16] And as a result, the text tells us the lie spread. It stuck. And at the time of writing for Matthew, probably mid, late first century, the great news had become fake news and was carried along by the Jewish people.

It is telling that from the outset, immediately following the resurrection, there was another force at work.

There's a counter force. There's what I would call a counter mission. There's a mission to thwart the gospel, to squelch the movement.

The religious leaders themselves would give themselves to this deception. They would violate the ninth commandment. They would resort to bribery to falsify the data, to maintain their power.

The enemy, the devil, has done this throughout Jesus' life. He couldn't kill him. So now he tries to conceal him. And lest you and I get duped as well, it's important that we make this observation now.

[10:27] There are twin stories that emerge from the empty tomb. One is to believe the resurrection was a hoax. It was a lie.

The body was stolen. A bribe was given. The result you hear often is this. Well, that God is impotent, weak, pathetic.

We're left with this God in the public sphere. If your God was as mighty as he claimed, evil would be eradicated. If he were as strong as he asserted, suffering would be removed.

This is often the God that the unbeliever touts, weak and powerless. And this is the God you and I would succumb to if you give yourself to fake news.

This is the lie of the devil. If the resurrection did not happen, we are, according to the apostle Paul, of all people, the most to be pitied.

[11:28] Our faith would be futile. We would still be dead in our sins. But we know that's not the case. As the counter-mission spreads a lie, the Christian mission spreads the truth, the news of the living Christ.

And in contrast to my first point, the great cover-up, the ESV has helpfully titled it, it's well known in all of our Bibles, as the great commission. The great cover-up is followed by the great commission.

And beginning in verse 16, the remaining 11 are to do as they were, they did as they were instructed, and make their way to Galilee to meet Jesus. It is in Galilee where Jesus' ministry began, and it is here where the disciples would be formally sent out or commissioned.

We know from the other Gospels that this was not the only appearance that Jesus made, but for Matthew, it's the most significant. Because for Matthew, he holds out how the Christian is to respond to a resurrected Christ.

What does it all mean? And I'm going to borrow or steal or take Pastor Helms' points from last week. It means at least these two things, that we are those whose lives are comprised by worship and by witness.

[12:51] Worship and witness. And it's reiterated again by Matthew to reinforce its place and primacy in our lives. We are people given to worship, verse 17.

As they see Jesus, they worship. As the women saw Jesus in verse 9, they worship. The disciples do the same in verse 17.

They glorify, cherish, adore, praise, value, prize, humbly give themselves to Jesus. They submit, surrender, sing of his mighty acts.

Worship is the giving of one's heart, one's entire being, to the one who created us. A.W. Tozer says it this way. Worship is to feel in the heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling, delightful sense of admiration and awe.

To answer the first question of the shorter catechism, what is your purpose? What is the chief end of man? Well, man's chief end is to do this, to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[14:09] See, we believe that as you worship Jesus, you are fulfilling the very purpose for which you were made. There is nothing more pleasurable, nothing more satisfying, nothing more meaningful than for you to give yourself to God in worship.

Interestingly, the worship in verse 17 is mixed with doubt. Now, I was like, this is a really odd phrase.

Those three words, you see it. And when they saw Jesus, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Who? Was it some of the eleven?

Was it a subset of the eleven? Was it, presumably there were more on this mountain than just the eleven? And what are we to make of this? Can worship and doubt actually coexist?

Now, here in this text, doubt most likely doesn't mean unbelief. The word can actually be translated, hesitate. There's a picture that you and I might recall where the disciples are crossing the sea.

[15:28] There's a storm, and the wind is against them. And then Jesus approaches the disciples on the sea. And Peter, seeing Jesus, as, you know, Jesus, that's you, command me to come out on the water.

And so Peter steps out of the boat onto the water, and for a brief moment, he walks upon the top of the water and yet begins to sink. And then Jesus follows up and poses this question, Peter, why did you doubt?

Or why did you hesitate? See, it wasn't that Peter doubted Jesus' power, but he hesitated or was uncertain.

He was characterized by the text in Matthew 14 by a little faith. And I think what Matthew wants to show us here, that the disciples, though they encountered the resurrected Christ, they had yet figured everything out.

You can't help but be bewildered, at least a little bit. Just imagine, a few days ago, he was bullied, bloodied, beaten, and buried.

[16:43] And there he is. You could sense the bewilderment. How does this happen?

Insert mind-blown emoji. I'm hesitating. What are you? Who are you? How did this all happen? Hesitation. Hesitation. Mixed with fear and trembling. Uncertainty. Mixed with joy. Awe.

With worship. I can't explain it all, but I'm inclined to worship in this moment. I can't understand it all, but I must worship. It doesn't make sense, but I must worship.

And perhaps this is the very lesson. Eleven disciples worship imperfectly. You know the feeling.

You know the paradox, because I know it too. Life's not going that well.

[17:41] I'm not sure how it's going to turn out. Yet, I will still praise. I'm filled with immense human sorrow.

Yet, I will sing. I'm bewildered by these circumstances, yet I will still bow. My body is ailing, but I still can lie here in awe.

My soul is languishing, but my hands are lifted. We can do that. That's the paradox. I'm not sure how this is supposed to go.

But I will give myself to worship. Rarely do we come with unadulterated worship. But Jesus still wants us to come.

And if we're not ready to come, he will actually come to us. If we won't budge toward him, he comes towards us in verse 18. The follower of Jesus worships the risen Lord.

[18:42] The believer in the resurrection bears witness to him. Worship is now followed by witness. 18 to 20.

Jesus comes near and gives them his final charge. His last words. Bearing all authority, he is about to send them forth into the world.

They are to move out, and they are to give themselves to the task of making disciples. They are to do so in an impartial way, indiscriminately. They are not to be ethnocentric in who they seek out.

They are not to be geographically selective in where they go. They are given the tall task of go into all the world. And as they go into all the world, they are to, in the language of elementary school, show and tell.

You know, if I have four young children, I remember in those early days, and still, actually, there are days when you're told, okay, go home and bring, maybe not your most prized possession in fear you might lose it, but bring a possession and bring it to class and show everyone why you love it, why it matters to you, and tell us all about it.

[19:54] And this is the commission that Jesus gives to his disciples. I need you to go, not only to your classroom, but to your workplace, to your neighbors, to the next city, to the next country, to the next alley, to the tall towers of academia, to the slums of India.

And I need you to go, show and tell. Well, what do I bring? You bring me, and you show me, and you tell them all about me. They are to show the world Jesus, his rule.

They are to tell of his kingdom and the salvation that he brings. And interestingly, they are not mere witnesses in that they are, they just, they not only go and tell, evangelism is certainly implied, but the task you see here is more involved than evangelism.

They are not just to go from place to place to say, hey, believe in Jesus, come down the aisle, raise your hand, pray a prayer, and pray a prayer. No, they are actually to go place to place, not only seeking converts and leaving them, but they are to go place to place, making converts and discipling them.

See, discipleship requires depth. It requires a relationship. It requires engagement. It requires the walking alongside of one another.

[21:18] It requires time. It requires commitment. It requires patience. The task of the church is certainly evangelism, that we are to go and tell, to show and tell.

But it also must be about discipleship. And at a minimum, it would seem from this text, it's comprised of two things, baptism and instruction.

Baptism and instruction. Baptism is this initiatory rite into the Christian faith. It is an act of identification. It is saying, give me the jersey.

I want to put it on. I want to put it on. I'm on that team. In the same way, you may walk by a restaurant and see the food establishment hang a sign. It says, under new management. Baptism serves as that public sign that hangs around your neck that reads, under new management.

[22 : 18] I used to run my own business. I used to be the sole owner and proprietor. It was all about me. I governed all this.

And then I met the risen Christ. And it turns out he's a better manager. He's a better proprietor. And I have turned my business from self-rule to triune rule.

God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It involves, discipleship involves baptism. The public giving of yourself to the Lord Jesus in identification.

Discipleship involves instruction. You see it there. Teaching them, verse 20. But it's not just teaching them so that their heads get big.

It's teaching them to observe. It's not only teaching for intellectual knowledge or to create a bank of information.

[23 : 24] It's the teaching with the aim of obedience. Teaching so that one may obey everything that is commanded by Jesus. It's instruction that leads to implementation.

Matthew's gospel contains more instruction than any of the other three gospels. There's at least five chunks of instruction if you revisit the gospel. Why?

Because for Matthew to be a Christian disciple requires teaching. And teaching. Teaching how to live rightly.

It's not merely right believing. It is right living. Discipleship that's marked by baptism or identification. Discipleship that's marked by instruction that's implemented.

That we are those who not only tell of Jesus to everyone. But we display the gospel everywhere.

[24 : 20] We are those sent into the world with the purpose of making disciples. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Teaching obedience to God's law and rule.

We as a church need to be about making disciples. We need to offer baptism. We need to emphasize its value being a command of Jesus.

We need to teach. Which we certainly do Sunday mornings. Not only at the 10.30 hour, but at the 9 a.m. hour. That is, it is crucial for our children.

For their formation. That is why we have adult education. Seven more weeks of unlocking, understanding, unfolding the end times.

This is why we have community groups. They matter because it's a place where we give ourselves to one another in discipleship. This is why we offer a men's and a women's ministry.

[25 : 21] So that men and women would grow as disciples. And these offerings exist to make disciples lifelong followers of Jesus. Jesus. Matthew closes with some of the highest Christology in the New Testament.

Few places in the Bible put Jesus as high as Matthew does at the end of his gospel. The totality of Jesus' reign is all expressed here.

It's enunciated by the word all. In case you have any doubt, all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to me.

There is none more supreme. There is none more superior. There is no one greater. And because of this universal power, you need to know I lay claim on all the world.

And that's why I send you to all nations. My reign spans all nations. And my people will be found in all places.

[26 : 28] I govern universally. And because I govern universally, my words are universal. Therefore, you teach all that I commanded.

My words are trustworthy and true. They never fail. They endure forever. And therefore, ought to be obeyed and followed. And you need to last know, as you go about doing all these things.

I am with you all the time. Or always. All authority is mine. I lay claim on all the nations. And so you go. My teaching, all my words, are superior words.

Therefore, communicate them. And as you go, I am with you all the time. His rule is over all the world. His presence is for all time.

And that leads us to the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel. But I also need to conclude the series, which we started.

[27 : 35] I don't even know when we started. But it's concluding today. Matthew's Gospel. We have titled, Jesus, the King Who Saves.

And along the way, we've given it subtitles. But as we close this series, we need to know, throughout the Gospel, Jesus' authority has been demonstrated. His authority over human ideologies. He taught as no one taught. He taught with divine authority, imparting the words of life. He had authority over sickness and the lepers and the lame. They were healed. He had authority over nature. He would speak to raging storms and they were brought to a halt. He had authority over demons who shuddered at his commands. He had authority over physical infirmities as paralytics walked and the blind received sight. He had authority over death that even his very grave could not hold him. And from the opening verse of Matthew, you see it, Jesus Christ.

[28 : 44] This is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Who is he? He is the son of David, the heir to his throne where he reigns forever. And there he sits enthroned with all power and authority. Who is this man? He is the son of Abraham. Who is Abraham? Well, he's your founding father, the father of a nation from whom would emerge a people, a people so great in number that it would rival the stars in the sky.

Half the nation is going to see one star eclipsed. I might be one of them. But they need to know that that one star is but one of many of God's people.

As many of the stars in the heaven and the sand of the sea from Abraham would emerge a blessing from all the world and here he is, the blessing to all nations.

Matthew holds him out, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the titles. Son of David, the king. Son of Abraham, the blessing to the world.

[29 : 58] He is also, you need to know, Emmanuel, God with us. And he closes with just that. You need to know God with you. He is there. Lo, behold, with you always, Emmanuel.

The grand promise that Jesus would be with his people to the end of all time. The book of Matthew. Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, Emmanuel. And we certainly can't forget this. When the angel goes to Joseph, Mary, Mary, take her as your wife and she's going to conceive and she's going to have a son and make sure you give him this name, Jesus.

Why? Because he will save his people from their sins. At book's end, you have an exalted Christ, an enthroned king, demonstrating his power to save.

Save from what? You might ask. Jesus is exhibit A. Save from death. death. Jesus is overcoming death, which is the consequence of sin.

[31 : 18] And that is the great news of triumph that is held out to you and I, readers of the gospel. Death has a claim on you. It has a claim on me because of my rebellion against God.

Death awaits me because of my unrighteous living. Death looms for the wages of my sins. But Jesus came and conquered.

And as a result, for all who cling to him in faith, he pardons and forgives, giving them eternal life.

Though in this life you might die and be buried because of Christ, he will raise you back to life.

And so that eternity would be spent in the new heavens and new earth, absent of sorrow, absent of pain, absent of sin, absent of suffering, forever present with the Lord.

And this is great news. And great news is shared news. And this is the news that I bring to you this morning. Because it's saving news.

[32 : 25] It is saving news. And I believe there are some in this room this morning that this is the most beautiful news you have ever heard.

That God himself would take you for himself and rescue you and save you. You've admired Jesus from afar.

You've watched at a distance. And this morning Jesus is calling out and laying claim on your life.

You are mine. He's calling to claim your allegiance. He's calling to summon you into his kingdom.

This morning, if you experience Jesus, may you experience him as the king who saves. Father, we there is no other name given for all of humanity, all the world, all the universe by the name of Jesus.

And in Jesus we find salvation and rescue, hope and peace. You are the saving one. And for some in this room, would you extend your love and your mercy, your power and claim them for yourself.

[34 : 23] That as these two narratives run amok in our world, one of an impotent, weak, powerless God, body stolen and hidden, countered by the true narrative, of a risen Christ, body ascended, seated and enthroned, coming with great power and glory to restore and rescue.

May we give ourselves to that which is true. We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus.
Amen.