

Matthew 28:1–10: Easter Sunday 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Matthew 28, 1 to 10, please remain standing as you're able for the reading of God's word. Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid.

Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning, Christ Church Chicago. As you're getting settled in, I just want to express my own love of your energy on this Easter morning and give special thanks to so many who have worked so hard over the course of this weekend. I think of the Good Friday service and all the attending preparations for that. And those who labored for our Valois breakfast beneath us this morning and the beautiful auditorium in which we sit, we are privileged and we are bouncing, in a sense, off your labors into praise. And a special thanks to the worship team just bringing us right to the throne. And how about that thing Max Jones arranged? I mean, come on. That was...

What a great day. What a great day. Let's see if we can go from strength to strength. There have been times when I have experienced an event so remarkable, so awe-inspiring, so deeply moving that I was compelled to tell others. You don't want to miss it. I wanted to make sure you take time to see it.

I've told them, watch it. Get in line for it. Spend your money on it. That's certainly the way Matthew treats the first Easter morning. He wants all eyes on Easter.

And we know this because of the way he frames things. I want you to see it. And if you don't have your Bible in front of you where you can look at it, I just encourage you to download some Bible app and get it on your phone where you can follow it and look at it with your own eyes. He is wanting to frame things three times over in those simple ten verses. He's compelled to write this single word, behold. Which of course means in the original language, hey, reader, don't miss this.

[3 : 3 1] Set aside some time for this. I'm telling you, Matthew says, I would stand in line overnight for a ticket to this. Let me show them to you. The first time we learn that the Easter morning was an event that remarkable in Matthew's eyes is in verse 2. Behold.

Behold. There it is. Don't miss this. But then it comes again. Later in verse 7. And behold.

And then finally, a third time, as though all eyes are to be on Easter, it's there again in verse 8. And behold. So we are right this morning to look at his narrative on the resurrection of Christ through the lens of this must be can't miss material.

This must be something that you want to take note of. It has me asking some questions as I've thought about it this week. What is it that we have to spend time on?

What is it, Matthew, that's so awe-inspiring, so deeply moving? Why would I stand in line for this? And what kind of response ought it elicit from me?

[4 : 4 7] First, the first behold, which governs the first four verses, is simply this. Behold. Don't miss the empty tomb.

Matthew sets the table for that with the arrival of the women. Do you see them there in verse 1? Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

The last time we saw these two wonderful women, it was the evening light of Good Friday. Their love for Christ, which had been evident in the land of the living as they ministered to his needs, was only exceeded by their love for Christ in his own death and following him through all the way to the end.

They were there with him in life, and here on the third morning we find him going to meet them yet again. Can you see them? The pre-dawn darkness?

Feet on a gravel path, slowly making their way to the cemetery. John Calvin noted that the women were intended first to chastise the apostles who were like persons half dead with fear, while it was the women who came with alacrity to the sepulcher.

[6 : 23] Yet the arrival of the women as first, and the need of women today in this church who would be just like them gives way in the text to the appearance of the angel while they were still on the way.

And notice, the angel's arrival comes with Matthew's voice telling you for the first time, hey, reader, behold, don't miss this about Easter.

And here it is. Verse 2, And behold, there was a great earthquake for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning, his clothing white as snow, and for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. What are we to make of this behold, this arrival of the angel? The earth was shaken. It trembled at a voice. An angel descended. A stone was rolled back.

[7 : 36] And the angel now sits on the stone. I mean, the last time the women were at this spot, the text said they were sitting opposite the tomb after Joseph of Arimathea had laid him in it and rolled the heavy stone over the front of it.

And now, those who were sitting opposite in the evening have in the morning light come and they see an angel sitting on top of it and the stone rolled back.

the open tomb. And we're left with the thought. Okay.

That's can't miss material, but I'm going to have to know what it means. You've asked me to see the open tomb, but what am I to make of it?

And thoughtfully, thankfully, Matthew raises the tension in his retelling at the very point when we're raising those kinds of questions. He moves from the arrival of the women quickly to the appearance of an angel all the way to the announcement that the angel makes.

[8 : 58] This is what's significant, the angelic announcement, which is included in his second behold. Second then, take this in, what he wants you to know is that Jesus was risen.

He was risen from the dead and that you're going to see him. This is the three-fold declaration of the Easter message.

This is what Matthew is saying. Hey, get in line for this. The open tomb is a consequence of the risen Christ.

Three times over, he's risen. He's not just risen from a sleep. He's risen from the dead. And he's not just risen from the dead. You're going to see him, he says.

These disciples are going to lay their eyes on him. Now, this message on a resurrection is nothing new to Matthew's gospel. It was the very opening line that we were told we're going to read good news about Jesus who is the son of David.

[10 : 03] And if you've got some Old Testament in you, it was David who was promised to have a son who would sit on the throne of God forever, a resurrected king.

So from the opening salvo of Matthew's song, we've had a promise that we've been awaiting a resurrection. Not only that, on two occasions in the gospel, this message was proved when Jesus raised two individuals from the dead.

And finally, that which was promised, that which was proven, is predicted three times over. If you've been with us over the last months, three times over, Jesus himself has said, yes, I am going to Jerusalem, yes, I will be killed, and yes, I will rise on the third day.

This message of the resurrection, nothing new. But the importance of it cannot be overstated.

Let me put it as clearly as I can. again, the resurrection must be physical, bodily, or not at all.

[11 : 19] It must be physical, not merely spiritual. It must be a resurrection of the body. The apostle Paul would put it this way, if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, our faith is in vain, we've misrepresented God, your faith is futile, you're still in your sins, and those who have fallen asleep in the hope of Christ have actually perished, therefore we would be of all people most pitied.

See, that's the significance of the physicality of the message. With devastating clarity, with cascading logic, Paul put the importance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus on display. It must be physical, not spiritual. It must be material, not metaphorical. Those of you who are thinking these things through and wondering what to make of a real resurrection, John Updike put the apostolic truth this way, in verse, make no mistake, if he rose at all, it was as his body. If the cell's dissolution did not reverse, the molecules re-knit, the amino acids rekindle, the church will fall. Let us not mock God with metaphor, analogy, sidestepping, transcendence, making of the event a parable, a sign, painted in the faded credulity of early ages. Let us walk through the door. And he's right. Christianity is nothing but a subjective, hoped-for, internal experience that will not value you or me in our death if he has not been raised from the dead and have the power of life.

[13 : 20] Yet for most people, the bodily resurrection is dismissed. It's relegated to the faded credulity of earlier ages. It's become nothing more for many than a day to eat chocolate bunnies or colored eggs, even though I am going to have such a colored egg this afternoon.

For students, it's often nothing more than a day around which their treasured vacations in academic settings are positioned. to retailers, it's the sign of winter closeouts and stocking summer merchandise.

It's become as small as that for us all. Put simply, it's been reduced to something spiritual, not physical. It's been reduced to metaphor, not material.

but it was, again, Calvin who said, and I love this quote, so stay with it, the lively assurance of our reconciliation with God arises from Christ having come as the conqueror of death in order to show that he had the power of new life at his disposal.

And so Matthew is wanting you and me to see through the eyes of his retelling the stupendous truth that this Jesus, the Nazarene, who laid down his body willingly on the cross, paying some penalty which death is the penalty for all sin, yet a penalty which could not have been for his own for he lived a righteous life, was therefore not held captive by death.

[15 : 17] It had to release him although it will not release you or me for we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And the sentence upon us is death lest there be one who could free us from that through their own righteousness. And so Matthew says this is the message of Easter.

Three times over he is risen. He is risen from the dead and behold he writes be sure to take this in. He is going before you to Galilee and there you will see him. and if this second behold in the telling is not elevated enough there is yet one more to come from Matthew.

It is even going to take you to a higher plane in the text from the can't miss material of the open tomb and the you have to take this in message of resurrection.

[16 : 28] He adds a third. He says don't even think about leaving until you see the women's response to it. Let's start in verse 8.

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. The first response to the resurrection message was the joy of bearing witness.

Did you catch it? They ran again to tell the disciples. In fact this is going to come again through the very words of Jesus after his appearance to them.

He will likewise tell them go and tell the disciples. The can't miss moment of Easter is the response of the one who in faith believes it to be true.

That there is one in the world who has overcome death and therefore gives me hope that I might overcome mine is to tell others that he's alive.

[17 : 35] I mean I can see the women in my mind now running to tell the disciples their feet that earlier made their way up that hillside slope to the cemetery in darkness in pre-dawn are now flying forward.

Have you ever run downhill on gravel paths and so they did stones moving hair in the wind eyes dancing to the ground and then one in front of them hoping not to fall dresses held to keep them

from stumbling eager as children set loose on an egg hunt to find the place where the disciples were staying.

They were made ready to bear witness to the message. how's your gate? Where are you running off to and for what reason?

What do you have to say to your friends or neighbors or family and why the topic of conversation is?

As it is, if the truth of the telling is there, then the response of the believer is to go and tell.

This is the greatest news in all the world. This is something you need. Not all of you might have.

This is something your friends must know.

[19 : 18] Members of your own family can be reconciled to God by faith. Jesus has won the victory.

We are all going to be raised on the last day, but some and only some will not suffer the second death.

Some will not have to pay for their own sins. For some the blood of Jesus will do so, and they will skip like calves from the stall into heaven.

Life restored with God, Christ our Savior forevermore. If you've never placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then this is the day of your salvation.

Let me just ask you, have you placed your faith in the resurrected Christ and his righteousness as being willingly by God able to stand in place of your own iniquities so that when he sees you, he views you through the work of Christ.

And Christ who was dead but now raised says, I am life. I am the resurrection and the life. And Father, this one is accounted holy, clean through me.

[20 : 49] You can enter into a relationship with God today simply confess that belief to him.

interestingly though, the joy of bearing witness is interrupted with, I believe, the most amazing don't leave this moment until you see it.

The appearance of Jesus where the joy of bearing witness gives way to the holy reverence of worship. can I show it to you in verse nine? There's our word, and behold, third time over now, elevating at every moment, the open tomb, the message of resurrection, and behold, here it is, Jesus met them and said greetings, and they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

Not only the joy of witness, but the privilege. privilege of pure and reverent worship.

How can anything less mark our lives than this? Do you see them there now falling at his feet in worship?

It says they took hold of his feet. I actually love that. This is what the church is to do. The church is to take hold of the feet of the resurrected Christ and worship.

[22 : 23] This is something not to miss. This is something to stand in line for. This is something to spend money on. This is something to give yourself to.

Yes, Christ Church Chicago, we must proclaim the name of Jesus to everyone, but we will come here each and every Sunday to be interrupted with that mission by the memory and reverence of worship.

What a contrast in the text. You may not remember, but in the fourth chapter, Jesus was in the wilderness. Satan came to him and tempted him, and he said, you know, oh, son of God, this realm is mine, this thing on earth.

I hold every person under my power, and if you will bow, fall at my feet and worship me, I will give you the kingdom of this world and all its glory.

glory. And Jesus said, no, to what this world would give in all of its glory, and in consequence, he receives now the kingdoms of this world and any kingdom there may be.

[23 : 58] he receives all glory from all people who have ever lived throughout all time.

He's king. I was thinking on Good Friday when we were putting our hands in red ink, and we sat in the front row, and I was moved by the notion of just a small room of people putting representatively their sins on a white cloth, and today there's no red on this thing.

This is just triumphant white today, and it's meant to show you again the difference between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, but I began to think Friday night almost just welled up with emotion.

How is it possible that in this room I'm seeing a few people representatively signify that their sins are on Christ?

And then you consider all the people, throughout all time and all their sins taken away through a perfect once and for all sacrifice.

[25 : 11] It's overwhelming. The truth is glorious. And the response in our heart ought to be the reverent, joy-filled worship.

We ought to be taking hold of his feet. We ought to do it with our voices. They ought to be strong in song.

they ought to be elevated in glory. There ought to be vigor for Jesus has met our every need.

With the privilege of worship, Matthew's gospel now comes full circle, doesn't it? as you and I learn to emulate the women here, we actually join the wise men who met him at his birth in chapter two. Coming from afar, they found their way to the house, and it says they fell down and worshipped him. Now, they knelt before the infant king, and we now today kneel before the risen Lord.

[26 : 39] We not only join the wise man, we join the leper who knelt before him. We join the ruler who saw him raise his daughter from the dead as he lay at his feet. We become like the woman who had the issue of blood, the lame and the blind who were put before his feet.

We are like the man who requested mercy for his son. All of these things happen at the feet of Jesus. Your sins are forgiven, your fears are outlaid, your obstacles in life are put before him. He cares for them all and you worship him. May we take hold of his feet, may we pour out our hearts, may we be a people who really get that line, I love you.

this church is filled with men and women who are actively serving the Lord.

But this day, each week, this house must be filled with people who interrupt the mission of witness, with the pleasure of worship.

[28 : 02] This is Matthew's Easter can't miss moment. Have you taken this in? Is Jesus your beloved?

Have you lost yourself in his love for you? Have you lingered in song? Have you been loud in praise?

Do you long to cast your crowns before him? Jesus, our living Savior, Jesus, God's forever king.

Happy Easter, dear family. I hope you didn't miss it. Our Heavenly Father, behold, what a moment.

I pray even now in these minutes that there would be men and women, children in our midst, who would take hold of your feet, believe the message of the resurrection, place their trust in his finished work, that we might together hail you as king throughout all time.

[29 : 28] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.