

Do You Know the Risen Christ?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 April 2021

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 0 0] Alright, well, it's Resurrection Sunday. We've been celebrating what happened long ago that day in song.

We heard the story read, and we want to take some time just to think about what this means for us this morning. So if you have your Bible, you can open it up to Matthew 28, verse 1.

We're going to be looking at the story from Matthew's Gospel where we heard from earlier. Matthew 28, verse 1.

And as we come to that wonderful Resurrection Sunday morning, we can't help but remember what's led up to this moment. And yet, where do we even start? This is all part of a greater story, the story of Jesus.

And that's even part of an even bigger story, the story of our world, the story of God. But let's remember for a moment what happened just the week leading up to all this.

[1 : 0 4] Jesus has come into Jerusalem. Jesus, the great miracle worker. Jesus, the healer. Jesus, the one who has been teaching massive crowds and with such authority.

He's come riding into Jerusalem just a week before all this to shouts of Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel.

It's been a week of excitement and anticipation. Just over three years before all this, almost nobody knew who this man was. And now here he comes riding into the capital city of Israel in the manner of a king.

With a massive crowd of people all around him. And people have gathered from all over to mark the Passover celebration here in Jerusalem. And the spotlight, the attention of everyone is on this man, Jesus.

Up until now, he's been a highly polarizing figure. And it seems that every time Jesus has come up to Jerusalem for another festival in the years leading up to this, all kinds of exciting things have been happening.

[2 : 2 0] There's been healings. He's done signs, miracles. There's been heated debate between this rabbi who hails from Galilee and the Jewish religious leaders.

And for some time now, Jesus has come to be on the wanted list of the religious leaders. And many in Jerusalem know it. Many people believe that Jesus is the King, the Messiah, the Christ that God promised long ago.

And if not that, they believe he's a prophet. Even some believe he's the ultimate prophet sent from God. But at the same time, many do not believe this about Jesus.

Some think of him as a great trickster, a deceiver, or even a crazy person. And all week long, Jesus has been going to the temple courts and teaching the people.

And the crowd there has been hanging on his every word. The religious leaders have been doing everything that they can to challenge him, to discredit him, to humiliate him, to trick him or trap him in his words.

[3 : 32] But nothing has worked. And then, eventually, finally, the evening of the Jewish Passover came. And Jesus came to celebrate the Passover with his disciples.

That very night, under the cover of darkness, Judas led a group of men out to where Jesus was. And they arrested Jesus and his disciples scattered.

Jesus was put through a couple sham trials. He was falsely accused. He was beaten. He was mocked. He was handed over to Pilate, the Roman governor, the next day.

The religious leaders stirred up the people in Jerusalem to demand Jesus' execution, even though he was found innocent by Pilate. And Pilate wanted to calm the crowd.

So he handed Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus was nailed to a cross and left to die. After Jesus had been executed, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Jewish council, he went and got permission to take Jesus' body down from the cross and bury it.

[4 : 51] So he prepared the body and he buried Jesus in his own new tomb. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance.

And then the chief priests and the Pharisees went and got permission from Pilate to secure the tomb. They put a seal on it and they posted a guard at the entrance.

They wanted to ensure that Jesus' body remained undisturbed. They remembered what Jesus had said while he was teaching, that he would be killed and then be raised on the third day.

And they didn't want to take any chances, so they put a few extra measures in place. Let's read what happened next from Matthew 28, verse 1. After the Sabbath, at dawn, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

These two women loved Jesus. They were some of the many close followers of Jesus. Why would they go back to his tomb? We don't know their exact thoughts, but we know that they loved Jesus deeply and that they believed in him.

[6 : 07] Everything that had just happened to Jesus was probably very fresh in their minds, playing over and over again like a horrific nightmare. The shouts of the crowd, Jesus' appearance after his beatings, the cries of pain as the nails were pounded in, the utter shame and humiliation of it all as he hung there, dying in agony on the cross, the taunts and the mocking of those who passed by and saw him, and even his words which he spoke in those last hours and moments before he died.

Even though they had seen him buried, these women were probably still going through the full range of emotions. Grief, shock, anger, deep loss.

They were mourning. Mark tells us that they had bought some spices so that they might go and anoint Jesus' body. Matthew here tells us simply that they went to see the tomb.

And they went early in the morning, at dawn. verse 2. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven.

And going to the tomb, he rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

[7 : 51] Can you imagine this moment for the women? Their hearts must have been pounding. Their eyes must have been wide as can be. Matthew says there was a violent earthquake, a great earthquake.

Not just a little rumble in the ground, but a great earthquake. And the cause of this earthquake was the angel. For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven.

Or because an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. This is where some of those superhero movies are so helpful to my imagination. You know those superheroes that fly, and sometimes they just make their entrance, they come shooting down from the sky, and the ground beneath their feet crumbles, and it sends a tremor out in all directions.

I imagine it may be something like that. This meteorite streaking down from the heavens and impacting the earth. What an awesome thing it would have been to see.

They felt the ground shake, and as they approach the tomb, they find that the stone has been rolled away, and they see this angel.

[9 : 02] They describe his appearance as like lightning, which probably means that he was nearly blinding in his appearance, so bright that their eyes could barely take him in.

His clothes, white as snow, purest white that they'd ever seen. And the women weren't the only ones who saw the angel.

The guards witnessed all this too. Matthew says in verse 4, The guards were so afraid of him that they shook or trembled and became like dead men.

You can just imagine them terrified, in shock, their hands shaking, utterly paralyzed with fear, unable to move a muscle in the presence of this awesome angelic being.

And then, verse 5, the angel speaks to these women. The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

[10 : 18] The first thing he tells them is, Do not be afraid. Probably the women in that moment felt a lot like the guards felt in that moment. But the angel assures them, You guys are in no danger.

And then the angel tells them that he knows why they have come. You're looking for Jesus. You're looking for the one who is crucified. You won't find him here, says the angel.

He is not here. He is risen. We can only imagine the shock of the women as they try to process all of this. Like, What is, what's happening here?

What are you saying? What do you mean he's not here? We saw him laid right there in the tomb. He is risen? What do you mean he's risen?

Like, risen to heaven, or risen back to life and walking around? I don't know what they were thinking. But I know that if I had been there, I would have had all kinds of questions just swirling through my mind in that moment.

[11 : 24] My emotions would probably just be all over the place, looking for a place to land. How do I respond to all this? The angel says, Come, and see the place where he lay.

Take a good look in here. You'll see. He's not here. And then, the angel gives them an assignment.

Verse 7. Says, Go quickly and tell his disciples he has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him. Now, I have told you. At this point, it becomes, it should be clear to the women what kind of risen the angel is talking about.

The angel says it right there. Risen from the dead. Kind of risen. Like, you and the disciples are going to see him walking around bodily, over in Galilee.

[12 : 26] Kind of risen. This isn't just a spiritual resurrection. This is a human body back to life kind of resurrection. Go, tell his disciples that he's alive.

Verse 8. So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid, yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

This translation is probably a little bit flat. More literally. And departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to report or announce to his disciples.

Can you feel the intensity of this moment for these women? Matthew says they ran. And you have to know that this wasn't just your plain Jane Joggers run in the morning kind of run.

No, they ran, it says, with fear and great joy. Probably the adrenaline was still coursing through their veins from everything that they just experienced and just, you know, giving them this explosive energy.

[13 : 39] But it wasn't all from fear. It was also from great joy. Our Lord is alive.

I can scarcely imagine what it must have felt like. But can you imagine them running? There they are running excitedly and then verse 9.

Suddenly, Jesus met them. Greetings, he said. This is a terrible English translation.

In English, the word greetings is one of the most formal greetings. It's kind of a subdued way of saying hello. It's like the thing you would say when you step up to the podium to make a speech.

in front of an audience. No, that's not right. The word he uses in even one of the latest translations of the Bible puts it in there right like this. The word he uses is actually, literally, rejoice.

[14 : 48] And that actually was a common greeting back then. Not unlike what we might mean when we say good morning to you, a joyful day to you, a happy day to you.

Rejoice. But of course we know that in this moment, this reunion between Jesus and these Marys, Jesus probably means this greeting to the fullest possible extent.

Rejoice. This is a very happy to see you moment. A reunion of reunions. Rejoice, he said.

They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshipped him. I love this. They just grab a hold of his feet and they won't let go.

And they worshipped him. Very strong word. They give him praise and glory. Verse 10.

[15 : 52] Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me.

As I was reflecting on this week, something in this little phrase just touched me and it was the way Jesus referred to the other disciples. My brothers, go and tell my brothers.

this is Jesus here, the resurrected king, the Messiah, the son of God, God in human flesh, and the women know their rightful place is at his feet worshipping.

And yet, how does he refer to his disciples? My brothers. My brothers. I love that. If I were Peter or any of the other disciples who had deserted him that night, I'm thinking, I'm not worthy to be called your brother.

I'm not worthy to be treated as a brother, as family. You're our king. You're the son of God. How can you call me a brother? Yet, that's what Jesus refers to them as, my brothers.

[17 : 10] And he doesn't overstate the truth of their relationship. What a joyful and happy day this was. Jesus. And this that we've just read is just the beginning of the story.

Luke has more to say. John has more to say about all that Jesus did and said after he was raised from the dead up until the time that he was taken into heaven.

This is the story of Resurrection Sunday. today. Now, what does it mean for us? Well, there's so much to say here and I don't think I'm overstating it to say that Jesus being raised from the dead means everything for us.

Where do we even start? The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that Jesus being raised from the dead is so crucial. It's so critical that if he hadn't been raised from the dead we'd all be lost.

we'd be utterly hopeless. We'd still have our guilt and we'd be stuck in it forever. We'd be facing the final judgment of God for our sins with no hope, no pardon.

[18 : 20] That Christ was raised from the dead is God's declaration that the sacrifice Jesus offered was accepted. Mission accomplished.

You and I, can be forgiven, were forgiven. Paul says it like this to the church at Rome. Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins.

This is Romans 4.25 and was raised to life for our justification. In other words, he was raised to life to secure our right standing with God in the courts of heaven.

That's what his resurrection brings about for us. Jesus' resurrection means everything for us. It means that Jesus was not a false prophet.

He predicted his death and his resurrection three days later, and exactly what he said came true. More than that, it means that everything Jesus said was true.

[19 : 23] Jesus claimed to be from heaven. He claimed to be sent from God. God. He claimed to speak to the people God's very words. And so the resurrection is the ultimate proof.

It's God's stamp of approval that yes, he does speak for me. He is my son. He is the Christ. He is the king that I have chosen and appointed.

He is the way and the truth and the life. So many of the promises of Jesus rest on the resurrection of Jesus. Think back to some of the things that Jesus said that we've been looking at in the gospel of John.

John 5 24, very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but is crossed over from death to life.

Can Jesus give us eternal life if he's still in the tomb? No. Jesus goes on in that particular conversation. He talks about how it's been given to him to judge all people at the final judgment.

[20 : 47] How can he do that if he's still in the tomb? He can't. he said to them that same day that there will come a day when he will call all people out of their graves to that moment of judgment.

How can he do that if he's still in the tomb? None of this can be true if Jesus stayed dead. You might remember Jesus' conversation with Martha after Lazarus had died.

He said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die.

These are totally empty words if Jesus himself was not even raised from the dead. I am the resurrection and the life. Paul doesn't overstate things when he says that if Jesus hadn't been raised from the dead, then our faith is futile.

It's good for nothing. But Jesus was raised from the dead, just as we heard. And as Paul makes clear, if Jesus has been raised from the dead, then we know that the way has been opened for us to be raised from the dead too.

[22 : 10] For us to have the eternal life that Jesus promised to everyone who believes in his name. And this is wonderful. This is great news.

It means that our greatest enemy, death, will not prevail over us at the end. Neither will the guilt that we have for our sins. Paul traces this out in his letter to the Corinthians.

We won't go into all of that, but I love how he says it. He basically says, because of Christ's own victory over death, all of us who are in him can take up a taunt against death itself.

Like, na-na-na-boo-boo, where, oh, death, is your victory? Where, oh, death, is your sting? It's gone. We have victory over death itself through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The list goes on. We could talk about how Jesus is in heaven, interceding for us right now. God, he wouldn't be if there was no resurrection.

[23 : 16] We could talk about how the promise was given that a son of David would come to sit on David's throne and rule forever. Could that be fulfilled without Jesus rising from the dead?

No. The resurrection of Jesus is everything. It's the foundation of all that we hope for and long for and are waiting for as Christians.

It's the foundation of everything God has promised to his people through all generations. But beyond all this, there is one thing that the resurrection of Jesus means for each one of us that's even more precious, at least to me, than all the rest.

You know, I was watching a thing with my family last night. It's the story of Jesus done in some live theater. And I got thinking, you know, the disciples had it really good.

They got to walk with Jesus while he was here. They got to see his face. They got to see the miracles that he did with their own eyes.

[24 : 24] They were able to touch him and feel him. And he was able to touch them. They had a very tangible relationship and friendship with Jesus that was unique and personal to each one of them.

the resurrection of Jesus means that each of their own personal relationships with Jesus didn't end the day that Jesus died. Think about that for a moment.

What John had with Jesus, the Apostle John, didn't end when Jesus died. It continued after Jesus was raised. That special bond that Peter had with Jesus continued after Jesus was raised.

that friendship that Mary Magdalene had with Jesus before he died. It didn't end the day of his death. That friendship continued after he was raised.

Now for all of them and for us, having a relationship with Jesus has changed. When he went back to heaven, in some respects, it became almost like a distance relationship, a relationship that now happens through his spirit that comes to live in us when we believe.

[25 : 38] But there is coming a day when Jesus will return. A day when that tangible, physical, visible relationship with Christ will be restored for Peter and John and Mary Magdalene and for us who believe in him.

For all of us who have never seen him face to face, for all of us who have never, like they did, felt his strong embrace, there is coming a day when we too will have that kind of relationship with him.

We'll see him with our own eyes, face to face, we'll be able to touch him, feel his embrace, we'll hear from his human lips that yes, he did indeed hear every single prayer that we prayed.

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of all that we hope for and long for and wait for as Christians. It's the foundation of our salvation, yes, but to me the most precious thing of all is that it means that each of us can personally know Christ himself today because he's alive.

We can have that friendship with him today, knowing that one day that distance will be gone and we will have his continued love and friendship forever in person.

[27 : 06] This is what it's all about. Do you remember what Jesus prayed on the eve of his death? This is what he said to his father, John 17 3, he said, now this is eternal life, that they, my followers, those you have given me, that they might know you, the only true God and me, Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

This is what life, life eternal, life forever is all about. It's all about knowing Jesus. Jesus goes on in his prayer.

We won't go into all the details. He prays not just for his immediate disciples, but also for those who will believe in him through their message. He prays that they would be unified and be one, that he would be in them.

He says, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me. Do you know that Jesus longs for that kind of personal relationship with you?

he prayed for it just before he went to the cross. A face to face see my glory, you with me where I am kind of relationship.

[28 : 40] He went to the cross because he desires that kind of relationship with you and with me. And if he hadn't been raised from the dead, we could never have that with him. So that's the thing that I'm celebrating most today because he rose from the grave and is alive today.

We can know Jesus Christ himself personally, deeply, and one day visibly and tangibly face to face. Let's pray.

Amen. Father in heaven, we give you glory. Lord Jesus, we give you glory and we worship you today.

You are our king, we believe. You are the son of God and we thank you that you have even brought yourself down to the level of brother and a friend.

We love you so much and we long for that day when you will come back and you will raise us to new life with you forever. May that day come quickly.

[29 : 53] In your name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen.