

The Risen King's Commission

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[0:00] Well, please turn back in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 28. In a moment, you'll hear some music played. I want you to see if you can guess the movie that the music goes with.

Thanks, Andrew. Anyone? Yeah, okay, thanks.

On the next slide. Yeah, it's Mission Impossible. I thought you'd get it straight from the... No? Okay. Tom Cruise has made five of these Mission Impossible movies, and there's also six, seven, and eight, I think, due to release in 2020, 2021.

Now, for those who have never heard of these movies, it's usually about a team working together to do a mission that seems impossible. But it turns out the missions are possible, usually because they have Tom Cruise, or so he likes to think.

Well, working together as a church to share the gospel and to see the church grow can seem like Mission Impossible in our world today, can't it? For starters, our world's morals have moved further and further from God's.

[1:15] So, for example, just last week in the US, in New York State, a law was passed which allows people to abort babies right up to their due date. Even though babies are clearly alive and literally kicking in the womb.

And to make things worse, when the law was passed, one newspaper said that the people celebrated as though they'd just won the Super Bowl. They even put pink lights, on the next slide, on one of the trade centres to celebrate this law that allows for murder.

To our shame, late-term abortions also passed here in Victoria, way back in 2008. And so how can God's church grow when so many are moving so far from him?

Then there's the persecution, which makes it harder to share the gospel, it seems. So just before Christmas, only a month or so ago, we read on the next slide that there was a brutal crackdown in China.

This is not all of China, this is some provinces in particular. And the article goes on to say on the next slide that Chinese police have launched a Christmas crackdown against Christians.

[2:26] And in one case, stormed a children's Bible class in that province. Because children are apparently, as far as the article said, banned from attending places of worship. Now, this is just one province, and it's probably a non-registered church.

But even the fact that they have to be registered now and monitored is a form of persecution. And of course, there's our own growing intolerance and apathy towards the gospel here in our own country.

So it wasn't that long ago, the Australian census was reported that people who ticked the no religion box had increased to 30% of the nation. So in this world today, it can seem like mission impossible when it comes to making disciples together as a church and wanting to see his church grow.

And so are we then crazy to send some of our people down to St. John's next week, or to send some of our 5pm key people to Cross and Crown last week? And are they crazy for going?

And are we crazy here at 5pm to want to keep working together as a church to see disciples made for Christ this year?

[3:40] After all, Tom Cruise is not with us. Of course, we do have one more powerful than Tom, one who is more powerful than New York State, and one even more powerful than the Chinese government.

We have the risen Lord Jesus. And while most of us remember Jesus has risen from the dead, we sometimes forget what his resurrection means. And so let's be reminded from God's word in Matthew's Gospel.

And it begins with an empty tomb. So point one on your outlines, verse one in your Bibles. Here after the Sabbath at dawn on the first day of the week, so that's Sunday, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

And so as I said, it's Sunday morning, and then something happens before they even get there. So I don't think they see what happens next. So verse two, there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb, 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. And now we need to remember here that these guards were not the temple guards, but hardened and highly trained Roman guards.

[5:00] You see, the chief priests were worried about something happening to the tomb. And so they asked Pilate for some of his guards. As if you just flick back and have a look at the end of chapter 27.

And we see it there, end of chapter 27, verse 62. The next day, the one after preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. Sir, they said, we remember that while he was still alive, that deceiver, Jesus said, after three days, I will rise again.

So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he had been raised from the dead. And this last deception about Jesus being the Christ will be worse.

Sorry, this last deception about him rising will be worse than the first. And take a guard, Pilate answered. Go make the tomb as secure as you know how. So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting a guard.

You see, they're worried about this. And so they do everything they can to make this tomb secure. Yet for all their effort, the angel of the Lord simply rolls it back and then sits on top of it as though it's all a piece of cake.

[6:13] And while the hardened, highly trained Roman guards shake, well, they shake with fear, don't they? And faint as though dead. And I suspect we're meant to see some comical irony here.

Their attempts to secure the tomb are laughable. And the very ones assigned to guard the dead now appear dead. While the dead one has been made alive.

And Matthew's point seems to be that nothing was going to stop God's plan to raise Jesus, to declare him king. Their feeble attempts to stop God, they're laughable. It kind of reminds me of Psalm 2, where God laughs at the leader's feeble plots against his anointed king.

For nothing will hold him down. My daughter had her 13th birthday party last night. And either the music was really loud or I'm getting really old.

Don't answer which. But one of the tracks I'm pretty sure I heard played was that an old song called, I don't know what the name is actually, it just says, Ain't nothing going to break my stride, ain't nothing going to hold me down.

[7:20] Oh no. Does anyone? No? Anyway. Yes, that's it. Whoever's got that one? Yeah, we've got to keep on moving. Now when we sing it, it's kind of wishful thinking, ain't nothing going to hold us down.

But when God says it, it's reality. Ain't nothing going to hold Jesus down. The chief priest's attempts are laughable. Well the guards presumably pick themselves up and then run off to report what happened to the chief priest.

And then in verse 5, the women arrive. So have a look at verse 5 to 7. So the women arrive and they see the angel and the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

He is not here. He is risen just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples he has risen from the dead and he's going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him. Now I have told you. And so here we see one piece of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus which is the empty tomb. And notice even the angel says in verse 6 to the women who are finding it a bit hard to believe, Come and see the place where he lay.

[8:31] Check it out for yourselves. But the empty tomb is not just one piece of evidence for his resurrection of which we have lots more evidence. It's also evidence, in fact, I think it's proof of who Jesus is.

And notice what else the angel said in verse 6. He has risen just as he said. You see, Jesus had been calling himself the Christ which means King and the Son of Man.

And three times he predicted that as the Christ or the Son of Man he would be killed and then three days later rise again. And so much so that even the Jewish authorities knew about his prediction, do you remember?

That's why they wanted the guards. But now that he has risen just as he said, then it also proves he is who he said.

Because Jesus really rose and he really is the Christ or King. He really is the Son of Man from Daniel chapter 7 who was given all authority. It's a bit like my son.

[9:39] He claimed to be able to beat me at a game of one-on-one basketball so I said to him, prove it. And he did. The point is, his actions proved his claim.

So also, Jesus' resurrection proves his claim as the King, the Christ. And now the angel says, go and tell. These women are now to be witnesses of this fact.

So we're at point 2 now in verse 8. So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them.

Greetings, he said. They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me.

And so on their way to tell the disciples, these women meet Jesus in the flesh. And it is flesh because they grasp his feet, did you notice?

[10:38] They witness a real bodily resurrection. And for us who cannot grasp his physical feet, then we can read their eyewitness accounts.

And not just of the women, but of the disciples who saw him in the flesh too, like Matthew, whose book we're reading now. And what's more, the fact that these first eyewitnesses were women, actually makes it better evidence for us.

Because unfortunately, in the ancient Jewish system, women were not regarded as good witnesses. And so if Matthew the Jew was really making all this up, he would have had two Jewish men of good standing be the first witnesses.

But the very fact that two women were the first witnesses, not only shows us that God considers women important, but that Matthew was not making this up. Or later on in verse 17 where Matthew says the disciples worshipped Jesus but some doubted.

If you're making this up and you're trying to sell it to the people of your day, would you point out all the problems like some doubted? I heard a true story of a man who was trying to buy a house in Sydney and on the website it said a beautiful bargain and so they went to the house and it was.

[11:56] Beautiful four bedroom house. The price was a bargain. He asked the real estate agent what was wrong with it and just as he'd finished his sentence, a huge Boeing 747 screamed over the top and then another one and then another one.

That was what's wrong with it. Now the real estate agent who was trying to sell the house could have put on the website four bedrooms plus flight path. But you don't do that when you're trying to sell something, do you?

And if Matthew was trying to sell this he wouldn't have pointed out all the problems, would he? But he did. Because he's not trying to sell a story he invented, he's recounting what happened, including what these women witnessed and their reactions.

And notice they leave the tomb with fearful joy at the possibility that Jesus is alive. Then in verse 9 they see him and worship him. And this was huge for a Jew.

Jews were emphatic that you could only worship one God. I mean it's the first commandment. Does anyone remember what the first commandment is? You shall have lots of other gods.

[13:03] No, no other gods but me. But because the resurrection proves Jesus' claims to be the Son of God, the King, the Son of Man, they rightly worship him.

Here is a right reaction. And then the angel, sorry, then Jesus like the angel says go and tell the disciples too. But before we get to the disciples have a look at a wrong reaction that Matthew gives to us in verse 11.

It says while the women were on their way some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan they gave the soldiers a large sum of money telling them you had to say his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were sleeping.

If this report gets to the governor, Pilate, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed and this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Here the guards testify themselves to the chief priests about what they saw with the angel and notice the chief priests seem to believe perhaps that Jesus has risen certainly that his body is no longer there and something extraordinary has happened yet instead of checking it out for themselves instead of drawing a logical conclusion from the evidence they simply deny it and seek to suppress it.

[14:31] They invent this lie about the guards being asleep and the disciples stealing the body which is a bit silly if you're the guard isn't it? I mean if you're asleep how do you know who stole the body?

You're asleep and it doesn't hold up because would the disciples really later die which they did for a lie if they knew the body was buried out in the backyard?

and then there's the sad irony that these Jewish leaders are the very ones who are supposed to teach God's truth yet here they are not only denying it but seeking to destroy it and sadly people are still doing it today like New York State's law to destroy both babies and the truth that we are fearfully and wonderfully made Psalm 139 to the Chinese government seeking to stop churches meeting and worshipping Christ above the government even though Jesus is Lord and yet we can take comfort in knowing that despite appearances he is Lord which brings us to the implications of the resurrection point 3 verse 16 it says then the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go when they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted then Jesus came to them and said all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me

I once heard a rather cheeky joke about a mean mother-in-law who went on holidays with her daughter and son-in-law they went to Jerusalem and while they were there sadly the mother-in-law passed away and the hotel manager had a brother who was in the funeral business so he informed the son-in-law that he could either pay a hundred dollars for his mother-in-law to be cremated in Jerusalem or ten thousand dollars to send her body back home for cremation the son-in-law said I'll pay the ten thousand thanks now the hotel manager was rather surprised he'd witnessed how mean the mother-in-law was to her son-in-law during the stay and so he asked the son-in-law why would you pay so much for her the son-in-law replied well I heard that two thousand years ago someone else rose from the dead so I'm not taking any chances now I suppose that might be one implication of the resurrection but the big one clearly is that Jesus is Lord that's what it declares to everyone as we saw before his resurrection proves he is the Christ the son of man who has all authority and power as promised in Daniel 7 he really is the rightful ruler over all nations and so it was right for the women to worship him in verse 9 and for the disciples to worship him in verse 17 and for us to worship him in 2019 of course for us it's not literally bowing before his feet but we worship him by bowing our wills before his word and serving him with our lives yet we are to do so remembering that this king is also our saviour who died to pay for our sins and save us from hell and we are to remember that so that we might joyfully bow our will to his word even when it's hard to accept or believe and that we might willingly serve him with our lives even when it takes energy and effort and we do this by the way we speak and act or the decisions we make about how to spend our time or money or doing our best to come to church even if we're tired or busy or it's supposed to be 39 degrees or even seeking to play our part in the church helping all nations serve him remember that was

Daniel 7 he was given all authority that all nations should serve him and that's the logic of verses 18 to 19 see there verse 18 you see because Jesus has all authority over all nations whether they realize it or not therefore we are to make disciples of all nations that they might rightly worship him too for he is their true ruler king I don't know if you watched the Australian Open but spoiler alert the winner of the men's final was Novak Djokovic which is on the next slide I think here he is I don't know if anyone see the game it was over pretty quick but by winning the Open

[19:26] Novak proved he was world's number one player the king of men's tennis if you like and so tennis fans praised him and Tennis Australia gave him a big trophy which on the next slide he continually kissed don't know why and then they gave him a big check for 4.1 million dollars not bad now does this mean because he is the king of tennis we give Novak our praise and our money too that we should worship him of course not he is the king of tennis not the king of us but you see Jesus is he is the king of everyone of us our nation of all nations and so all nations ought to give him our praise our money our worship we ought to serve him with our lives now of course one day every nation will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord but they will do so either willingly as his brothers and sisters or unwillingly as his enemies but he wants us to worship him as his family that we might enjoy eternal life in a new creation and not eternal death in hell and so the command to make disciples is both for Jesus' honour as king but also for people's good you see making disciples here is the main command but Jesus indicates it includes three things two of them are baptising and teaching people which is a bit like our gathering and growing in Christ of our mission statement which is on the next slide you see in the early church baptism happened the moment you became a Christian and so it became synonymous with conversion or being gathered but he didn't stop there

Jesus also said to his disciples to teach people and that's a bit like our growing in Christ but did you notice here in verse 20 it's not teaching them anything we like it's teaching them Christ's commands like the Sermon on the Mount in other words it's teaching them God's word for that's how God's spirit will grow God's people in Christ and so that's why we have the means of our mission on our bulletin as well which is on the next slide we prayerfully promote you know doing everything we can having supper doing all these other activities that's promoting God's word allowing it to happen we prayerfully promote and proclaim notice God's word in love we're to play our part this year in either promoting or proclaiming God's word that people might be gathered and grown in Christ but there is a third thing here that making disciples often involves at the start of verse 19 it's going to make disciples of all nations means going to the nations although here in Melbourne most of the nations have come to us we live in a multicultural society which means among other things great food so that's really good but we're still to go in different ways which is why I've decided on the next slide to add a go to our mission statement and no I won't be adding a new word every year just so you know but all of us are to go into the world whether at work or a social or sports club or amongst our non-Christian family and friends we're to go and be known as Christians to live differently that we might stand out as Christians and take opportunities to speak about our faith lovingly when they come up and so for one guy he was known as a Christian at work in the city and people could see it in his life you know his actions backed up his words and so a couple of times there was some guys who had issues in their life they would come to this guy from our church and ask him for his advice and in due course he was able to share with them the hope he has in Christ too but for some of us it's not just going into the world to be Christian going might also include joining a club in order to make disciples and so for another person at our church they joined a photography club because they like photography but also to get to know some non-Christians so that in due course they might share with them the good news of Christ and for some of us from this service going also includes going down to help at Blackburn from time to time and for those who left last Sunday going to Cross and Crown to do church in a different place and together to look for opportunities to share the gospel in different communities but for others it means to stay here and be committed to working together to make more disciples of Christ in this community now I realise going is never easy but it's not easy for those who stay either is it and new things often come with a sense of excitement let me tell you it does wear off having planted a church or a congregation before and so if we stay it can feel like we're missing out and then there's also the loss of relationship that we might feel with those who have left particularly those who have left to go to Cross and Crown and there's likely to be a period of grief as we adjust so it would be much easier if everyone just stayed together wouldn't it in our comfort zone you know in here especially when it's so hard to make disciples out there but the thing is we can go we can see people go we can stay we can keep sending

because of Jesus' promise see the last sentence Jesus says and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age now the fact that Jesus is with his disciples to the end of the age means that this command is not just to the eleven it's to us as well it's to us in 2019 and the promise is that we're not alone as we seek to serve him with our lives that we're not alone as we seek to make disciples in this world for Jesus is with us by his spirit and this Jesus who is with us is none other than the king the son of man who is all authority who rules despite appearances and so we can have great confidence no matter what the world does this passage is often called the great commission but we need to remember it as the risen king's commission so that we might remember who it is that gave it to us the one whose resurrection proves he has all authority and so can build his church through us no matter what

Jesus said a little earlier on the next slide he said I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it well while the last Australian census showed an increase of 30% of Australians seeking no religion it also showed that 52% had an affiliation with Christianity so it's not all doom and gloom what's more Christianity is still the largest religion in the world yet our comfort ought not to be found in those things but in who is with us Christ the one who is with us and rules with all authority and power Jesus is Lord even here in Melbourne we're on the winning side and so while it may sometimes feel like mission impossible we're not crazy in sending people to Blackburn or Cross and Crown nor are we crazy to keep working together here at HGD this year playing our part to go gather and grow in Christ by prayerfully next Wednesday night prayerfully promoting and proclaiming

God's word in love for we have someone with us who is much greater than Tom Cruise don't we we have the risen Lord Jesus and that means it's actually mission possible let's pray our gracious heavenly father we thank you for your son who by his death paid for our sins and by his resurrection proves he is Lord thank you that he is always with us by your spirit building your church through us may this give us confidence to faithfully serve you this year no matter what our world does in the name of our risen saviour and king Amen