

He Has Risen

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[0 : 00] Let us now turn to the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 16, and reading again at verse 6. And he said to them, that is, the angel said to the women, do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.

Now here's a question for everyone. How many of us this evening came to this building seeking Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified?

Answer the question in the secrecy of your own heart. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

And particularly the sentence, he has risen. There is a biblical truth that states that humiliation brings exaltation.

From the teaching of Jesus, you may remember how he taught, whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

[1 : 29] It is a theme that you find running through Scripture. And we have read in chapter 15 of Mark's Gospel of part of the cosmic dimensions of Christ's humiliation.

And in chapter 16, Mark tells us how in an explosive moment, the grave could no longer hold Jesus of Nazareth.

If you are familiar with the Book of Acts, you may remember how that book tells of a conversation between a Roman governor by the name of Festus and King Agrippa.

Festus reported that Felix, another Roman governor, had left Paul imprisoned. Festus stated that the Jews had certain points of dispute with Paul about their own religion.

And then he went on to state, And about a certain Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.

[2 : 43] That point of dispute is still contested to the present of. It was something that the Apostle Paul argued strongly for because of its paramount significance to the Christian faith.

If it were disproved, that is, if the resurrection were disproved, there would be no relevant Christian message to proclaim.

Resurrection is the hinge upon which the story of the world pivots. You know, to claim that a person actually expired, was buried, and three days later again rose from the grave without any human intervention, seems too fantastic and unbelievable.

Many at the time of the death of Jesus found it difficult to believe. Yet, the factual, biblical evidence for the resurrection is substantial.

And that is important. It is a bigger topic than one might think. Not only has to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the past, The Christian doctrine of the resurrection includes the belief that Jesus rose from the dead, but also that all believers who have slept in Jesus will also be raised when he comes in the glory and majesty of his second coming.

[4 : 29] And that event has yet to take place. Paul writing to the Thessalonians, For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

The second advent is the terminus, the point at which everything is completed and consummated. It is simultaneous with the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the regeneration of heaven and earth.

The gospel writers were careful to report the fact of the resurrection. Without it being a factual, supernatural event, then there'd be really no point in the message of the gospel.

[5 : 50] Without the resurrection, Christian ministry is pointless. Personal faith is ineffective. God's character is called into question.

So you find that each of the four gospels record something of the resurrection story. Each gospel has its own emphasis, and you could argue that each gospel is catering for different groups of people.

For the early church, the message, the Lord has risen indeed, was the message that excited, inspired, and filled them with anticipatory hope.

It was the joyous message communicated by the two travelers on the Emmaus Road, who had such a marvelous encounter with the risen Lord, an encounter that lifted their deep gloom, filled them with renewed, vibrant hope.

They had gone through the whole gamut of great despair and deep disappointment, without even a glimmer of hope. Without the resurrection, that deep darkness would have remained.

[7 : 14] The Saturday, prior to the first day of the week on which the Lord rose from the dead, was for the followers of Jesus a day of desolation, a day of shattered dreams, of gloom and inertia.

For Mary at the cross, a sword had pierced her soul. Peter was probably paralyzed and even tormented by his denial of the one whom he truly loved.

Think of John, the beloved disciple, and Mary Magdalene's heartache. For those followers of Jesus, it was indeed a time of deep gloom.

Many people in society are living in the despair and darkness of dark Saturday. In fact, one writer terms our present generation, Saturday's children.

Our cities and towns teem with pools of human misery. In the midst of an increasingly godless world, despair grips people's hearts everywhere.

[8 : 32] Here then is truly good news. He has risen. What can we deduce from this marvelous scripture of truth he has risen?

Three thoughts. First, the fact of the empty tomb. Second, the feet of Jesus. The feet of Jesus. Not F-W-E-T but F-E-A-T.

The feet of Jesus. And then thirdly, the focus on personal experience. First, the fact of the empty tomb.

Until the early church was confronted by the empty grave, the expectation of a resurrection was virtually nil. The women who had on Friday watched the crucifixion of their beloved Jesus left their home early on Sunday morning while it was still dark.

They had a particular purpose in mind. They wished to wash and perfume the body of the Lord. They did not anticipate a risen Christ.

[9 : 47] Resurrection was clearly not on their minds. You could say that in going to the grave early in the morning they were motivated by love in what they intended to do.

And Mark in the context of our text writes of their particular worry. Very early on the first day of the week when the sun had risen they went to the tomb they were saying to one another who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? The stone was very large. The implication being that it was too heavy for the women to roll away.

It could not be easily moved. Matthew in his account writes of a conversation that took place between the chief priests and Pharisees.

Possibly none of that was known to the woman. We remember how that imposter said while he was still alive after three days I will rise therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people he has risen from the dead and the last fraud will be worse than the first.

[11 : 10] Pilate said to them you have a guard of soldiers go make it as secure as you can so they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

And yet regardless of their anxiety the women pressed on with their mission saw the gospel writers make plain the obstacles or the cause of their anxiety had been removed when they arrived at the tomb.

Matthew in his account reports what happened. 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 light in his clothing white as snow and for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

The stone was rolled away an angel of the Lord had rolled it away but let no one be under the impression that the stone was rolled away in order to let Jesus out from the grave.

That was not the purpose of rolling away the stone. The purpose of rolling away the stone was to let the church and the world know that the grave that had once been filled was now empty.

[12 : 45] Until then no grave had ever been opened from the inside. There were those who were resuscitated to life by the power of Jesus but this grave was unlocked from within.

Jesus required no stone to be rolled away to come out. Here was one who removed the keys from the locks of death.

and he testifies to that in the book of Revelation in the first chapter. He testifies that he died that he became dead and behold he is alive forevermore he has the keys of death and hates he possesses the keys of the unseen world and of death he has absolute control over everything connected with man's departure from this life.

The separation of our soul and body and our subsequent eternal condition. And then you ask yourself should we consider the sealed stone to symbolize anything?

Well could I suggest that the grave until the rising of Christ from the dead was like an impregnable fortress.

[14 : 23] No one had been able to breach its walls. Generation after generation after generation had passed into the grave creating its own grief and sorrow in the lives of those left behind.

And you may be present this evening or listening online and that parting has left you almost in a state of limbo. You feel inconsolable so difficult to face each day without those who are such an integral and intimate part of your life.

Let me ask do you know the friend who sticks closer than any brother? Have you some experience of the warmth of his ultra sympathetic comfort?

If not will you ask him to come into your life to soothe your grieving heart? Here then was a grave opened from within.

The stone that symbolized the finality and undefeated power of death was rolled away.

[15 : 41] The grave was opened and the power of death and the grave conquered. The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered death and the grave.

And you may remember how John the disciple came to believe that marvelous truth. He had run you remember to the grave. Twenty saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head not lying with the linen cloths but folded in our place by itself.

And then John goes on to write he saw and believed. You might say when he went into the tomb and saw for himself the evidence nobody but the cloths lying there and the face cloth folded in a place by itself the light dawned his understanding was illuminated and he believed it was for John I believe a penny dropping moment or an aha moment you know when you do not grasp or understand something and then all of a sudden you see it that's an aha moment he understood that Christ had risen and although he still had much to learn of the consequence of his rising so let me ask are you here this evening like John did that penny dropping moment take place in your life are you present and understood the way of salvation through faith in

Jesus Christ and when that happened did you wonder that you did not see it before then I think many were like that and as you reflect on the empty tomb tonight can you say with John we have seen and testify that the father has sent a son to be savior of the world whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God abides in him and he in God so we have come to know and believe the love God has for us the Christ who entered the grave was under the power of death for a time has risen he was stronger than death Jesus of Nazareth says the angel who was crucified he has risen he is not here see the place where they laid him yes the grave where he lay was empty but his very emptiness bore ample testimony to the fact that the

Lord of life had proved his lordship over death and the grave the cloths in the empty grave a categorical assurance of his triumph and power the fact of the empty tomb undisputed even by his enemies the fact of the empty king!

[19 : 01] the empty tomb death is no longer king light reigns the power of the grave has finally been shattered that brings me to my second thought the feet of Jesus ask the question what was the feet of Jesus and the answer of the Bible he is risen what a remarkable story death and the grave were unable to hold him the Bible reports for us that there were those who saw the risen

Christ Luke tells how two of the followers of Jesus had such an uplifting and illuminating encounter on the road to Emmaus with the risen!

Christ and then subsequently in the breaking of bread and he tells in his account how they retraced their steps to Jerusalem there they met the eleven disciples and others and they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together say the Lord has risen indeed it has appeared to Simon then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of bread and in the very middle of their of recounting their unexpected uplifting and wonderful experience there was a sudden entrance by one who stood among them even although the doors were closed as they were talking about these things Jesus himself stood among them and said peace to you but they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit and this little wonder Luke places emphasis on the identity of this intruder into their gathering by the use of the words

Jesus himself Jesus himself stood among them the Lord gave them the assurance that it was none other than himself in his risen body he presented them with irrefutable evidence see my hands and feet and so on and at one level it was fulfillment of his own promise to the disciples given in the upper room a little while he had said to them and you will see me and as they pondered what he meant then he went on to say truly truly I say to you you will weep and lament but the world will rejoice you will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn into joy and he went on to use the illustration of the birth of a child so also you have sorrow now but

I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you oh how they rejoiced when they did see him how they rejoiced when they did see him their sorrow and even their terror turned to joy their troubles and doubts removed as their great high priest he had gone into the holy place with his own blood he had paid the price demanded by a holy law the offering was accepted by a holy and a righteous God and now as the returning high priest he greets them with a benediction shallow could be shortened for the Aaronic benediction the Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you the Lord lift up his countenance on you and give you peace he is the basis of their peace and he preached!

peace to them they were presented with visible evidence of the! he had risen indeed! And so to prove that he wasn't some apparition figment of their imagination you find written in John's gospel he showed them his hands and his side and in that passage it is recorded that Jesus said behold my hands and feet that it is I myself handle me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have when he had said this he showed them his hands and his feet he showed them his hands and his feet in other words he was showing that the piercings and the marks of his crucifixion were still visible you could say it was a silent argument but also a very powerful and effective argument and to further assure them of his identity he ate in their presence so when he appeared in that locked room he had a physical body not like ours the same yet different he was simply there in spite of the locked doors and from that I think we can make at least this deduction tonight in your life the risen

[24 : 35] Christ can go where no one else can go can go where no minister can go can go where no doctor can go he can go where no teacher or youth leader can go he can go where no friend can go he can reach deep into your life anywhere and anytime there is no place where you are no depths which constitute you as a person which Jesus can't penetrate Jesus resurrection from the dead equips him to do what no one else can do there is no one else like him in all the universe he is alive Jesus can reach into your life however broken you may feel this evening however distressed however upset however difficult your providence however much alone you may feel however despondent however dependent and subject even to the forces of any kind of addiction he can reach into your life touch you and change you do you find comfort in that

I certainly do and I hope that you do too he is the true servant of God and the Bible tells us of his character traits a bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not quench a bruised reed a smouldering wick you know that's a picture of of you and me by nature broken reeds smouldering wicks and this Jesus the risen Jesus he takes us in our brokenness in our loneliness and he heals and restores the message of the risen Christ is I live it was sufficient to convince a doubting

Thomas prompt him to speak from his heart words of reverential law my Lord and my God God remember as I said how the message of Jesus is alive is reinforced in the first chapter of the book of Revelation in the vision that was given to John and Patmos when I saw him wrote John I fell at

his feet as though dead but he laid his hand on me saying fear not I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forever more I am alive forever more many believers despite knowing that their sins are forgiven live in the terror of sin's power because of their own felt weakness in the face of temptation the savior who rose from the dead has that same resurrection power to give to his people remember the prayer of

Paul in the letter to the Ephesians in the first chapter where you read these words what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead is that not the power that enables the believer to continue in faith to turn away from sin and offer your life in worship and service to God Jesus is alive he is able to conquer every ruler and open hearts that are filled with prejudice against him and that is how our hearts are until the Lord takes away these prejudices! heart of men and women against the entrance of the message of the gospel so that you would not accept the message of the gospel oh my friend is Mr.

[30 : 02] Prejudice whispering in your ear this evening is he telling you that you have time enough to make peace with God well in a world of unrest you will find rest in the living Christ you will find rest for your soul and there's one other thing that arises from his being raised and it is the nature of the relationship that Jesus has with those whom he designates his brothers remember the message that the risen Jesus entrusted to the woman who had been inconsolable until she was reassured that she was in the presence of her risen Lord go to my brother says Jesus to Mary Magdalene and say to them I am ascended to my father and your father to my God and your

God despite their failings despite their shortcomings the letter to the Hebrews reminds us the risen Christ it's not a shame to call them brothers and that demonstrates that the strengths of the family bonds of grace are very strong they're not weak in fact they're unbreakable bonds I am ascending says Jesus to Mary Magdalene in other words he's lifting her focus heavenward and as one writer expressed it we thank God for that message for it has lifted our eyes upwards more than any other message that ever reached us the phrase I am ascending has snapped the cords that bind us to the dust it has given us a heavenly citizenship and a heavenly hope it has ensured that the Christian's eye should gaze evermore not backwards but upwards that quote came from the late professor R.A.

Findlayson one time professor of theology in our college the feet of Christ he has risen Jesus is alive how much does that mean to you and me this evening do we delight in the fact that he is risen do we take comfort from it are we looking to the risen Christ as we live each day and can we say with Thomas my Lord and my God or is it true that we are totally indifferent to this marvelous fact that Jesus who became dead is alive forever more you know we will all have to meet him sooner or later how do you anticipate doing so if you continue to reject the risen

Christ the primary significance of the fact of the empty tomb death is no longer king and finally the focus on personal experience you know woven into the fabric of the resurrection story is the focus on personal experience on the part of some I have already referred to some of those who saw and you remember how John records for us that Thomas was not present when the Lord first met with the disciples on the first day of the week and the other disciples wishing to share the good news naturally told Thomas we have seen the Lord words surely that spoke of their conviction but also of their great joy

[34 : 32] I don't think that just reading the bare words that they convey the sheer exuberant joy of the disciples and every person brought to faith in Christ can testify to a greater or lesser extent of the joy in their lives that cannot be smothered by grief no matter how great the grief and eight days later John tells us Thomas was present and made the acknowledgement that I've already referred to that has resonated with so many people over the years my Lord and my God the disciples sight of the risen Jesus was shared by a remarkable diverse assortment of people all with different personalities

Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians writes that he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time and I mention that fact in case anyone present is of the view that the risen Jesus merely appeared to just a handful the sight of the risen Jesus brought peace to troubled hearts and those who saw the risen Jesus they were given a commission that gave purpose and direction to their lives go therefore was the commission that was entrusted to them and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you all the way to the end of the age what a

marvelous promise and he always fulfills his promise and in order to fulfill that commission he equipped them by breathing upon them and he said to them receive the Holy Spirit in other words he was empowering them in the ministry to which they were called they were to proclaim the gospel they were to proclaim the good news that Christ has risen from the dead the aim of gathering men and women and discipleship to Christ oh for that to take place the power of the Holy Spirit is essential they were to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria to the end of the earth and you know that is still the responsibility of all believers to the present hour to be witnesses to the risen Christ to offer an unbelieving world peace with God through the forgiveness of sins achieved by the death of Christ and the peace of God as Christ's spirit lives within the hearts of all who believe the fact of the empty tomb indisputable no doubt about it the feet of Jesus he rose from the dead he passed out of the grave while the stone was still there no human eyes saw he is alive does the living Christ have a place in your heart and life this evening the focus on personal experience we have seen the risen Lord can you testify to the same can you say you've seen the risen Lord by faith and you are following him looking to him day by day to fulfill his promises in your life let us pray eternal and ever blessed one we thank thee for the message of truth that Jesus has risen oh Lord help us to know more and more of the risen Christ not just to know about him but to really know him as our Lord and our God and the glory shall be thine in Jesus name we ask it amen let us conclude by singing to his praise from psalm 98 page 360 of the psalm book psalm 98 page 360 of the psalm book oh sing a new song to the

[40 : 12] Lord for wonders he hath done his right hand and his holy Adam him victory hath won the Lord God his salvation hath caused to be known his justice in the heathen sight he openly hath shown he mindful of his grace and truth to Israel's house hath been and the salvation of our God all ends of the earth have seen let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise lift up your voice aloud to him sing praises and rejoice let us sing these verses oh sing a new song to the Lord oh sing a new song to the

Lord all wonders she has done! his joy!
and his! his holy and his glory have won!
the Lord God his salvation has passed to the the Lord has just to save the hidden side he opened his in life his name his name!
grace and truth to Israel his name been salvation of our!

[42 : 29] the of God all ends of the earth sing let all the earth come to the Lord send forth the joyful eyes with the pure voice unto him sing graces and rejoice may the grace of the Lord Christ the love of the the of Father fellowship and the Spirit rest on abide with you all now and forever amen to ending!

ending! ending ending! ending ending ending ending ending