

Resurrection Sunday

Matthew 28: 1-10

I welcome you all to our new church plant here in the Kirkmichael area. I trust and pray you've had a blessed week.

So let's read our key Scripture passage for today on page 428 of the church Bibles.

Matthew 28:1-10

1 In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first [day] of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead [men].

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

I know this Sunday is commonly referred to as Easter Sunday but I much prefer Resurrection Sunday. It tells us exactly what this celebration is about and it is the main reason why we are here today worshipping at Free Grace church. Without the resurrection there would be no Gospel to share - no good news. But because of Jesus work on earth that finished on the Cross with the final victory over death and sin we come here to recognise and share in the wonderful truth of the gospel and of God's grace and mercy toward mankind.

In Genesis 3:15 we read... And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This is the first suggestion we have of God's redemptive plan. Here God is speaking directly to the serpent who has caused eve to be deceived in the Garden of Eden.

Enmity refers to a struggle or conflict so the verse begins with a reference to the struggle that mankind - born of a woman - will face against Satan. These are daily struggles we all face, earning a living, providing for our family, resisting temptation etc. Since the fall of man from grace in the Garden of Eden we have all endured these difficulties BUT we can have victory over these things.

The second part of the verse shows us how and through whom this victory has been established.

The woman's seed 'shall bruise they head' is a symbolic picture of Christ crushing Satan, defeating him and sin for all eternity.

Christ's resurrection crushed the serpent's head. Through His death and resurrection He has trampled down death and delivers us from the grave.

So, let's take a look and consider the events leading up to this day.

For just over 3 years Jesus has been meeting with people and teaching them about the importance of true faith. Not faith born of duty but faith that has substance. In John 14 He tells Philip, one of his 12 faithful disciples, that 'if you have seen me you have seen the Father'. The disciples were in no doubt that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They longed for a magnificent victory over their oppressors and truly believed that Jesus was going to redeem them.

Sometimes the things He taught seemed impossible - in John 2 Jesus says that the temple will be destroyed and in 3 days He will raise it up. Of course everyone is thinking how can that be possible? It took 46 years to build the temple and He says he can build it in 3 days?

You see, we are a privileged people.. we can open our Bible and read the whole story and it makes sense to us today... but imagine how far fetched and unreasonable some of these claims seemed to the people of that day who only had the Torah ~ what we now call the Old Testament.

So a few days earlier in the week, the disciples are together sharing a meal and Jesus prophecies forthcoming events. They still don't really understand what is about to happen but they trust Him and go with Him to the Mount of Olives.

Here on the mount he is betrayed... Judas, one of the 12, betrays Jesus with a kiss and so our Lord is taken in to the hands of the authorities. The disciples, frightened and confused all run away.

There follows a trial, Jesus is accused of blasphemy and the punishment is to be death on a cross.

Imagine the utter despair of the disciples. Their hopes have been completely shattered, they have given up everything to follow this man Jesus and now they have lost all hope. Their Lord and King is to be crucified and their hopes and dreams will be crucified with Him.

Have you ever felt completely overwhelmed by a situation in your life? I'm going to share with you today how to have victory over those situations... how to have Hope even when things seem hopeless.

You see this isn't the end of the story... the best is yet to come.

We're going to look mainly at Matthew 28: 1 to 10 but we will touch on verses from the other Gospel books where the resurrection is written out in detail. The book of Acts records 19 different sermons with 13 of those placing emphasis on the resurrection.

I would like us to consider 3 aspects of this passage

1. The Adoration of the women in verse 1
2. The Activity of the Angel in verses 2-8

3. The Appearance of our Lord in verses 9-10

Let's start then with our first point - The Adoration of the Women

These women, Mary Magdalene and Mary (mother of James) have left their homes very early in the morning in order to bring spices and oils to the grave to embalm the body of the Lord. There were more women with them - in Mark 16 Salome is with the 2 Marys bringing the sweet spices and in Luke 24 it adds another woman Joanna as well as other women.

There were probably at least five women going to the tomb together initially although other groups of women may have visited later. Some, like Mary Magdalene, had been close to Jesus during his time of ministry while others may have only heard of him through their friends but they came together to complete the task of embalming the body.

These women truly loved Jesus. The 2 Marys in particular would have been very devoted to him during his time of ministry and for them the act of nurturing the body in death would have been immensely important.

Now let's consider our second point, the Activity of the Angel in verses 2-8

While the women are still on their way to the tomb the Angel of the Lord descends. Now in the Bible there are a lot of references to Angels. Sometimes they appear to be the same size and stature of your average man while at other times, such as on this occasion at the tomb, they appear to be quite magnificent. From verse 3 above we can see that this angel must have radiated light and an aura of immense power must have surrounded him because the guards were immediately afraid - So afraid they became 'as dead men'... unable to move or speak. The angel rolls away the stone - not a small rock but a huge stone that would have taken several men to put in place originally.

Now Jesus, in his supernatural body could have exited the tomb without the stone being moved but it was important that the women, and others who came after them, could see that the tomb was empty. It was also important proof of the divine nature of our Lord. There would be no way the women could have moved the stone, the disciples wouldn't have gotten past the guards to move the stone and nobody else desired to move the stone...so if it was none of these it must have been divinely moved just as Matthews gospel tell us.

When the women arrive what they see must make them nervous because the angel says to them 'fear not'... before he confirms the reason they are visiting the tomb. He already knows why they have gone there and what they intend to do.

Now... Verse 6 contains two of the most pivotal statements of the Christian faith - He is not here and He is risen.

Firstly, He is not here - unlike other religious icons today like Buddha or Mohammad, Jesus rose from the dead. There is no grave for Him. We can still see today the tombs of Rebekka, David and Absalom but there is no tomb for Christ. In all of the worlds' religions only Christians have a risen Saviour - A Saviour that was promised long ago.

And secondly, He is Risen. He has not been moved from the grave. He has not simply been 'stolen' and hidden away somewhere else. He has Risen from the dead. The angel encourages the women to take a look for themselves and In marks gospel we read that they entered the sepulchre to take a good look inside.

The angel then commands the women to go and tell the disciples the good news of Christ's resurrection. The commentator David Guzik notes that this was an appropriate honour for the women who had courageously and publicly identified themselves as His followers throughout his ministry.

So, they hurry from the grave, excited to tell the news of the empty tomb and the resurrection.

Then we come to verses 9 and our 3rd point ~ **the appearance of the Lord**. We see that even before they arrive at the meeting place of the disciples the women meet Jesus. He speaks to them with a welcome of All hail! or O joy! and they fall and worship at his feet. They actually 'held him by the feet'. He was not just a vision or a spirit but he was a physically complete resurrected body. Just hours before these women were in mourning, they were in despair and all hope was gone.... But he came to them first to personally show them that everything has changed because He is Risen.

In verse 10 Jesus assures them saying "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. He gives them comfort and confirms again what the angel in Marks' gospel account said to go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee where they will see him themselves.

Be not afraid is the confirmation of this sermon because it brings hope that he is alive and that through his death and resurrection we can be victorious over sin and we can face with courage the challenges of life.

Those who are born again have a living hope in Jesus Christ because of the resurrection. The power of the resurrection helps us to live our lives the way God intended us to live them. In Romans 6 Paul tells us that 'sin will have no dominion over us'. We won't achieve sinless perfection this side of heaven but we can have the victory over sin. It will not control or rule us.

Have you experienced the good news from that empty tomb 2,000 years ago? Is Jesus your Saviour today? Are you ready to meet him? Does the risen Lord live in your heart? If not, or if you aren't sure, you can be eternally saved today.

For those who are Born Again we have a living hope because of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. We have earned a new future life in heaven for all eternity, our bodies aren't new like the Lords yet but our spirit has been made alive with new resurrection power.

If through listening today you feel moved to know more, or if you want to come close to the Lord and ask him to be your personal saviour please come and speak to me after the service.

