

# God's Resurrected King

By Don Green

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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

The message of the Bible is that man is lost, desperately dead in trespasses and sins, and that Jesus Christ came to save sinners like that, to save them with his life, with his death and with his resurrection, and it's easy for us, I fear even in a church like this, it's easy for us to pass over the significance of those things, of what it means to be lost. To be lost means you don't know where you're going, you can't be found, you're lost and you don't have the ability to find your way out. That's central to the definition of being lost. If you know the way out, you're not lost, right? Well, the Bible presents us as all lost in our trespasses and sins. We sang just a moment ago, I hope I can remember the lyrics properly because I didn't write them down, "I will sing of my Redeemer, His triumphant power I'll tell, How the victory over sin and death He gives." But you get the point, we just sang it, and we're singing of the triumphant power of Christ to save us from sin and death and hell. You see, salvation is an indication to us that we do not have, you do not have the power to save yourself. That's very crucial to understand and to understand that if you are to be saved, salvation depends not on your ability to believe because you do not have the ability to believe. Can I be as plain and clear about that as I possibly can? The book of Romans says that the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God and it does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Now this is a cannon-blow to the pride of men to hear that they do not have the ability to save themselves, that they need saving, and to hear that they do not even have the ability in order to do that act which is necessary for them to be saved. It's because you're lost, it's because you're dead in trespasses and sins that you need salvation and the Bible is using these words not in a mitigated soft sort of way. Death is death, there is no life there. There is no ability there and we need to understand that salvation depends not on your ability to believe but on something else. Salvation depends on Christ's ability to save you, Christ's ability to draw you, to work in your heart and to give you new life and to give you a new heart so that you would come.

The natural man does not have that ability on his own and it is so fundamental to understand that, that you as a lost sinner are in a desperate condition from which you do not have the ability to deliver yourself. You need an act of God to save you or you will not be saved. That's how lost you are. Those who are not in Christ, this is how lost the unsaved man is and this is desperately, this is desperately concerning to hear if God

would give us the ears to hear and to understand, is that you are lost and that means you can't find your way out. You are in a jungle of sin and death with thick high overgrowth, with desperate ill animals pressing upon you, wanting to devour you as it were, in the thick of heat and humidity that is oppressive and you don't know how to get out of it. That's the condition of a man that is lost and when the Bible tells you that you are lost, it's not saying that you're partially lost but it's not that serious, this is a matter of profound consequence that casts us upon the ability of another to deliver us and that ability is found in Christ alone, and it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that displays his ability to save us. The resurrection shows us that Jesus Christ has power over death, that Jesus can enter into that dark realm and come out on the other side, not only can he, he did. He has displayed that he has resurrection power. He has a power that you and I do not have. He has a power to lead us beyond the death that sin leads us into. So the resurrection is a beacon of light to lost sinners to show them the way forward, that there is one who has an ability to save that is outside of us.

Now let me just kind of dwell on that for just another moment. It's no secret to those of you that come here that one of the places that I enjoy going is to cemeteries. I like to be in a cemetery. I like the quiet of it. I like the reflection of eternal issues that it forces upon my mind and, you know, I find that to be spiritually healthy even if it's not for everybody to enjoy that. But here's the point, you walk into a cemetery, you stand at the grave of a loved one that you miss desperately, and you realize you have no ability to call them out. Oh, people talk to the tombstone as if the person is there but they're not, are they? It's just kind of a fiction that we engage ourselves in to try to mitigate the sorrow that we feel in the moment but when it comes to actually changing the situation, it does no good for me to go to the Vernon Cemetery and stand at my father's grave and say, "Dad, come forth! Dad, come out!" Because I don't have that power. I can't call anyone from the grave. There's a church within the past month in California that tried to call a dead girl out of the grave and embarrassed and humiliated themselves and brought reproach on the Gospel as they tried to do it. We don't have that power. We don't have the ability to do that and it's in the same manner that we have, we don't have, I don't have the power to call anyone out of spiritual death. I can't save anybody and when you can't save yourself. If there is to be a resurrection in the physical realm, it has to come from God. If there's going to be a resurrection in the spiritual realm, it has to come from God. We don't have the ability to produce it on our own. Now the wonderful news of Scripture is that in time and space history Jesus Christ came and he conquered the grave.

Before we turn to Matthew 28 to finish our brief series on the Gospel of Matthew, I want to show you from Scripture the significance of the resurrection and the privilege that is ours to be on the receiving end of hearing things like this. Turn to the book of 1 Peter 1 for the opening of today's message. In 1 Peter 1:10 through 12, you have an opportunity to see what a great privilege it is for your ears to have the words of the resurrection fall upon them. It is a great privilege for us as men, let alone believers, it's a privilege for men to hear about these wonderful things of which we've been speaking.

In 1 Peter 1:10, the Apostle Peter says, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know

what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look." The point among others in this passage is that you who are living on this side of the cross have an immense privilege that was given to you that better men than you wanted and it was not granted to them. The prophets who spoke the word of God in Old Testament times, it indicates that they went back to their own words, they went back to their own writings because they knew that there was more to their writings than what they understood in the moment, and so they searched and they studied what God had spoken to them and they understood that there was a significance to their words that transcended their own ability to understand and they longed to know it. They wanted to understand these things and God said, "No, it's not for your benefit. It's for those who will come later." And what the prophets learned according to Peter is that they learned that their ministry was to benefit us who were on the other side of the cross. Those prophets who suffered for God, those prophets who boldly stood and proclaimed him in the midst of a wicked and sinful generation, those men whose boldness still testify to us today were told, "Your ministry is for people to come later, people to come afterwards."

So look at it there with me again there in verse 12, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you." And what was it that they wanted to understand? Well, the Spirit of Christ in verse 11 had predicted to them that the Christ would suffer. The Spirit of God indicated to them that there were glories to follow after those sufferings but the prophets just couldn't quite put it all together because Christ hadn't come yet, the progress of revelation was still in motion, and so the prophets wanted to see these things but they were told, "This is for people later," people like you and me in this post-cross dispensation.

You look at verse 12 with me, who is it that provided these things? It was the Holy Spirit himself. It was the third person of the blessed Godhead that provided these things. The Holy Spirit sent men to preach the Gospel to us after the resurrection of Christ. The Spirit of God worked and in that apostolic era men proclaimed the Gospel and throughout the ages there has been a maintenance of a testimony, sometimes a very flickering wick on the candle, but God maintaining the testimony to bring the Gospel to you here today for you to hear these things, these things that are a gift from the blessed Holy Spirit, these things which have endured the test of persecution and time, these things which have been delivered to us by better men than we are. That's the nature of the privilege and how great is the privilege? Look at it there at the end of verse 12, Peter says these are things which angels long to look into. The whole spiritual realm of angels, these magnificent created beings, the prophets longed to look into these things and yet they don't get the understanding, they don't get the fullness of it in the way that you and I do as we open the Bible and have the Holy Spirit open our minds.

Do you see, beloved, do you see what a great privilege it is of ours to hear of the glories that followed the sufferings of Christ, those glories including his resurrection? You see,

we just have to have a spirit of gratitude and of humility in light of these things. It humbles me to think that the prophets wanted to see these things and to understand them and they were told, "No, it's for somebody else," and here I am standing in the benefit of that now here in the 21st-century, here you are sitting in the benefit of it now. There are men like that that weren't given to what we have, angels longing to look into it, to understand these things and here we are, God has given the privilege to us? Beloved, that means something. It means that, one, we should be very grateful for it and also there should be coming upon your heart a sense of accountability and responsibility for this, that if this has been given to us and denied to better beings and better men, then, wow, what kind of responsibility must be ours to earnestly look at these things, to seek to understand them and to apply them to our lives and to see what the significance of them are. God has given us this privilege.

The prophets spoke of the glories that followed the sufferings of Christ and those glories include his resurrection. Well, that's what we want to look at as we conclude our brief survey of the Gospel of Matthew. Turn now to Matthew 28, if you will, in light of those things to recognize that this is a great privilege of ours, and we tend, sometimes we tend to just talk about the resurrection on so-called Easter Sunday but the resurrection is crucial to all of life and it's a fitting topic for any time of the year.

Now as we come to the resurrection and as we come more specifically to the earthly life of Christ, I want you to realize something before we go to the actual account of the resurrection in Matthew 28, is to recognize this, that during his earthly ministry Jesus Christ was predicting his resurrection all along. The resurrection was not an afterthought because he was unexpectedly crucified by hostile forces. No, this was the plan all along. After the Transfiguration where Jesus was transformed and displayed heavenly glory before his disciples, after the Transfiguration he told his disciples in Matthew 17:9, you don't need to turn there, Matthew 17:9, he said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." He said, "I don't want you to talk about this until I've been raised from the dead." He knew what was going to happen. He foretold it in advance.

In other places he said and told his disciples and even those that were hostile to him that he would rise from the dead. Look at the Gospel of Luke 18 with me. Luke 18 in verse 31, Luke 18:31. You'll want to keep your finger in Matthew 28 as you do. In Luke 18:31, Jesus took the 12 aside and he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." This was God's predicted plan. It had to happen. It could have been no other way. This was the outworking of the eternal plan of God to save a people for himself, to save a bride who would become the bride of his Son, and Christ says that part of that is going to involve his resurrection. He told them in advance. It was promised beforehand.

Look at the Gospel of John 2. John 2. You remember how Jesus cleansed the temple. In verse 15, "He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the

sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables." So much for a picture of a gentle and, you know, benign Jesus. God's glory was being violated and Jesus acted in response and in verse 16, "those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business.' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house will consume Me.'" A fulfillment of the prophets. "The Jews then said to Him, 'What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?'" On what basis do you come in and overturn our temple practices? Verse 19, "Jesus answered them," and pointed them to a coming event, his resurrection. Jesus answered them and said, verse 19, "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body." The real temple, not the physical building of stones but the temple of the living God, the temple of God himself, the temple of his body where he was incarnate, God incarnate. Jesus said, "Kill this body and I'll raise it up in three days." And that's what he did. That's what he did. They couldn't conceive of a power that could build a temple in three days, well, Jesus was talking about an even greater power to raise himself from the dead, to resurrect himself.

Here's what I want you to see, beloved, as we start to turn soon to Matthew 28, is that throughout his earthly ministry Jesus was telling different people at different times, "There is a resurrection of Me that is coming. I will be raised from the dead. The Son of Man will be raised on the third day." It was central to the way that he was teaching his disciples and preparing them for the climax of redemption in his death, burial and resurrection. He told them ahead of time. Beloved, this had to happen. It could have been no other way. God ordained this before creation to be what would come to pass. You see that in Acts 2. The prophets were foretelling it under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. One of the tests of a genuine prophet was that the things that they predicted came to pass. Jesus predicted it, said, "This is what's going to happen." So the whole veracity of God is at stake in the reality of the resurrection. You can't tamper with the resurrection without tampering with the eternal plan of God, without tampering with the words of Christ. Christ said even in his own life that this would happen.

Well, let's look at the resurrection of Christ then. Let's look at the historical account of the resurrection and then draw out some significance from it. Looking at Matthew 28 now, Matthew 28, beginning in verse 1, of course. Now as we come to Matthew 28, for those of you that haven't been with us because you were away for the holidays or maybe you're visiting, we have seen from the book of Matthew that Jesus is God's promised King. God promised in the prophets that there would be a Christ and in the genealogy of Christ, in the youth of Christ, in the ministry of Christ we saw all of those prophecies being fulfilled, and one of the central aspects of Matthew's Gospel is to say that Jesus did this or these things happened and it was in fulfillment of prophecy, and so he's tying it tightly with the ministry of the Old Testament prophets. So John the Baptist fulfilled prophecy. The geography of Christ's ministry fulfilled prophecy. The miracles of Christ fulfilled prophecy. The teaching of Christ fulfilled prophecy. God kept his promise to send a King but they killed him as we saw last time and we left one chapter for today. They killed him but Christ came back to life and when we say Christ came back to life,

beloved, I want you to understand what we're saying. We're not saying some kind of sentimental sense that Christ lives on in the minds of his disciples, that he is remembered and he lives on in that way, he lives in our memory, that's not what we're saying. When we say that Christ is resurrected, we're saying that he died and he was buried but he came back to life. He was placed in a tomb with a dead body but now the grave is empty, the tomb is empty, the body is not there. They could have silenced Christian preaching from the start if they had merely produced his body but they couldn't do it. Do you know why? It's because he wasn't in the tomb that the Roman legion was guarding. That tomb is empty and Christ is resurrected and God has given us his inerrant, infallible word to tell us about that. In Matthew 28:1,

1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

Now before we go any further, beloved, I just want to emphasize the words of the angels to the women. He said, "He is not here. He is risen just as He said." You see, at these key moments in redemptive history it is being tied to what was said before. The angels are saying, "He's not here. He's risen just as He said." As we saw from Jesus, he said, "I'm going to be raised. It's in fulfillment of what the prophets said." And there is this consistent testimony of the word of God, the consistent testimony of men over time showing us that there was a consistent plan of redemption that was unfolding in these things of which we read about, in the unfolding of the work of the prophets of Christ and then the apostles. So we find that this is central to redemption, it is central to the credibility and the veracity of God because God has been saying for thousands of years, "This is coming," and in the resurrection of Christ we see that it has indeed come.

Now let's talk about this resurrection for just a moment and kind of see what Scripture says about it so that we're thinking rightly about it, so that we are protected from people who try to make the resurrection less than it was as I was alluding earlier. This was a bodily resurrection. The disciples touched his flesh. Look at Matthew 28:8,

8 ... they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them [and what did they do]. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

Those are feet that had been in the grave and a dead body, attached to a dead body you could say. He came out of the grave and he came out bodily. He came out alive in flesh so much so that the disciples could grab hold of that flesh and hold it and touch it. It was not a spirit, it was not a ghost, it was not an apparition. It was a bodily resurrection that had taken place.

Look over at the Gospel of John 20 where Christ pressed this upon a reluctant disciple named Thomas. Thomas was skeptical when he heard the oral reports of the resurrection. In verse 24 of John 20, John 20:24, "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." So he hadn't had the benefit of seeing it with his own eyes. Verse 25, "So the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them," and I want you to know that this is an emphatic statement that it's making, it's as though he's pounding the table as he says it, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Wow. He was definitive about it. Unless he saw a real physical resurrection, he wanted no part of it, he would have no part of it. He said in advance, "I won't believe this. I won't believe your report unless I can see it for myself."

And in the wonderful condescension of our Lord in his gracious coming to his own, verse 26, "After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.'" Then he comes to Thomas, I love this scene, "He said to Thomas," because Jesus knew what Thomas had said, right? Jesus knows all things. He knew what had been said and how Thomas had put his belief, tied it, "There must be a resurrection, I must see it for myself or I won't believe." Jesus knew that. Jesus knew he had said that and he comes to Thomas and rather than rebuke him for the stringency of his comments, he graciously says to Thomas, "Thomas, reach here with your finger, and see My hands." See the nail prints, Thomas? They're right there. Touch them. They're there for you. He said, "reach here your hand and put it into My side." You remember how the Roman soldiers pierced him in the side, blood and water came out, left this gaping wound that his bodily fluids flowed out of? Somehow Jesus showed him that and said, "Thomas, here it is. Put your whole hand in there. It's real. You can do that. It's real flesh and real flesh can touch real flesh here, Thomas." Thomas stopped being unbelieving but believing. You see, this was a bodily resurrection that took place.

We'll come back to Thomas' response in a moment, but after his resurrection, Jesus could eat food like you and I do. Look at Luke 24:41. Do you realize, beloved, that we're talking about this central event, the very climax of human history? That everything about life and eternity depends on the realities that we're talking about here today? And that it's been given to your ears by the Spirit of God to read these things with your eyes and to hear them with your ears? What a great privilege we have and in Luke 24, actually let's start at verse 37, "they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?'" And he does it again. He does it again, he says, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." He's resurrected and yet he's got a human body, human flesh, human bones.

"And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet," because his feet were pierced too in the nature of crucifixion of the day, and so they were able to see it with their own eyes. In verse 41, "While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them." Flesh and blood eating the flesh of a fish in a way that humans do.

Scripture tells us elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 15, that there were hundreds, 500 to be precise, 500 brethren who witnessed the resurrected Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:6, "He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time," who saw it with their eyes, who beheld it with their ears and their hands.

And beloved, when we talk about the Gospel, when we talk about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, you need to understand that the resurrection is central to the Gospel. There is no Gospel without the resurrection. Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 15. Look there with me for a moment, 1 Corinthians 15. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, it says, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." There is no saving faith if Christ is not raised from the dead because the resurrection is the power of God to salvation, the resurrection is the indication that God accepted the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of his people and if he's not raised from the dead, then death still holds him, and if it still holds Christ, it still holds you and there is no deliverance anywhere, but Paul says in verse 20, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." So this resurrection is central to the Gospel and the bodily resurrection was a key feature of apostolic testimony.

You don't need to turn there, I know I have you jumping around in a lot of different places today. If nothing else, let that impress upon you in how many different places Scripture makes this emphasis on the resurrection that we're making today. I'm not making a mountain out of a mole hill here, I'm giving brief testimony to the greatest mountain that ever existed. In 1 John 1:1 The Apostle John said, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life... we proclaim also to you." And so this resurrection was a bodily resurrection as shown by all of these different proofs that we find in Scripture, the prophetic anticipation of it, Jesus' prophetic proclamations about it and the words that are stated and the actions that people took as Jesus made his resurrection known in human flesh to those contemporary witnesses.

So what we have here, then, as we've talked about God's promised King over the last two Sundays, Matthew 1 through 27, and last time we left him off, as it were, dead, so to speak just in terms of the timing of our messages, what we have here is that God's promised King is a resurrected King. This is a King who is not just simply King over an earthly realm, he is King over death. He rules over the realm of death and death cannot hold him and it is this Christ, it is this resurrected Christ that commands us at the end of the Gospel of Matthew 28, turn there with me. We've looked at this passage a time or two in the past. It hasn't been a great point of emphasis in some ways, but in Matthew 28:16, we'll come back to the verses that we're skipping over, in verse 16,



16 ... the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Now I want to tell you something, every week, twice a week I want to tell you something, right? That's what I get up and do. But I want to tell you something about this. When Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth," remember at what point he's talking. He has visibly conquered the grave. He has resurrected and so when he says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth," that is true. It is demonstrably true as the disciples are hearing him speak these things. It was incontestable. It could not be denied that all authority belonged to him. And his command in verse 19,

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

His command, his authority at the center of the mission of the church. We don't get to redefine it to make it what we want and we don't bother trying to redefine the church to accommodate the immoralities of the age like the United Methodist Church is in the process of doing today. We don't get to do that because the church isn't ours. What we teach is what Christ commanded. It belongs to him. It's his people and we go and make disciples according to the word that he has revealed.

And in verse 20 he goes on and says in words that I often quote to people in times of distress, this same Christ who has conquered death says,

lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And so when we proclaim Christ, we're proclaiming the risen one, we're proclaiming one who has done what no one else has done. He's walked out of the grave on his own power. By the power of the working of the Triune God of which he is an essential person, he raised from the dead, and it is in the power of that resurrection that we teach, that we proclaim him, and Scripture tells us, Scripture tells those of you, maybe you're here and true Christianity is new to your ears, Scripture says that believing in the resurrection is necessary for you to be saved from your sins.

Look at the book of Romans 10. Romans 10 in verse 8. The Apostle Paul has been explaining about the realities of God's salvation throughout the preceding nine and half chapters and he says in verse 8, "'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching," and what is the content of that faith, what is it that we must believe, what is it that we must confess, what is it that the Spirit of God must produce in your heart if you are to be saved from your sins and eternal destruction? Verse 9, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in

your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." This is central to the Gospel. We should shut the doors and walk away and burn the building behind us if we don't believe in the resurrection. If we're not going to proclaim a resurrected Christ, we have lost our reason to exist. And if you deny the resurrection, if you reject the resurrected Christ, you have lost your reason to exist by which I mean you've lost your only hope and you can face nothing but eternal destruction as the righteous judgment of God for your sins.

Everything hinges on this, beloved. Everything hinges on this and so what's our response to all of this today? Well, understand that the resurrection puts a divine stamp of approval on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only Savior. There is no other and that means that he has by right of his sacrifice on the cross, by the power of his resurrection from the dead, that means something to each one of you here today. Christ has the prerogative, he has the authority, he has the right to command you to come to him, which is what he did, "Come to Me," Matthew 11:28. "Come to Me." He commands sinners to come to him as he calls them and they have a responsibility to obey that command. To refuse that command is to commit the greatest sin possible, and so he has the right and the prerogative to call us to himself.

And in Matthew's Gospel, going back to Matthew 28 now, you can turn back there with me in Matthew 28, Matthew gives us a picture of the different responses to this resurrected Christ, and as we read this, my friends, you earnestly need to assess into which of these camps you yourself fall. In verse 8 they left the tomb quickly with fear, great joy, ran and reported it to the disciples. Jesus met them, greeted them. They came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Beloved, by faith have you come to lay hold of the feet of Christ and is he the object of the exclusive worship of your heart? Is he at the center of the affections of why you live? Because this is the nature of saving faith, to bow in submission to him, to receive him, to trust him as the only one who can wash away your sins, without whom you would die.

Jesus said to them in verse 10,

10 ... "Do not be afraid. Go and take word to My brethren leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

You know, in a context like this, it just seems like the most reasonable thing for anyone to do, to believe in Christ, right? I mean, there's no reason to reject him. I mean, this whole mission of his was a mission of mercy and love to condemn sinners, and he calls with sovereign power and prerogative, "Come to Me," and commands people, and even in Matthew 23, not simply a bare lifeless command does he make but with an earnestness of heart he looks out over unbelieving Jerusalem and weeps over them because they would not come.

So in a greatness of love, he commands you to come. In a greatness of love, he calls you to come. Indiscriminately calling you to come and here in these verses we see disciples

who respond in the right way. They come up, they fall at his feet, they worship him, but that's not the way everyone responds, is it? In fact, if you're counting numbers, weighing percentages, it's not the way most people respond, and in a room of this size, I can only assume that statistics tell me that there are pockets of people more like verse 11.

11 Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' 14 And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." 15 And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

What was it that the chief priests were doing? They were lying against what they knew to be true. They were conjuring up, they were concocting stories to explain away what they knew to be true, explaining away this resurrection that was amply testified to them in every conceivable way. And in like manner today, this is what some of you do in response to the Gospel, in response to this loving gracious Christ who so lovingly calls you to salvation and out of eternal ruin that you might be saved from your guilt, that you might be delivered from the wrath of God that is upon you. And you find ways in your mind to justify your refusal. You excuse yourself from responsibility or you say, "This isn't for me," or you know, "This guy talks too long. You know, this is an old book. Who should believe that? I'm gonna go my own way." Different manifestations of the same spirit that is shown by these religious leaders in verses 11 to 15, "I see it all but I reject it."

And what an awful thing that it would be if some of you walked out in that spirit today. What an awful thing for you to walk out choosing to identify with these corrupt religious leaders and their rejection and refusal to bow to Christ rather than joining with the disciples who fall at his feet and worship him. There could be no possible excuse to justify that. There's no way to explain that except the corruption of your own heart, and I want you to understand that if you walk out as an unbeliever in Christ today, you walk out rejecting Christ and saying, "I won't have this man reign over me, I'd rather be with my buddies drinking beer in hell than to have Christ reign over me," understand something very serious, is to recognize that if you walk out an unbeliever, that is completely on you. That is completely your responsibility because your sin and rejection of Christ is not something that comes to you from God at all. God isn't making you reject Christ. That's what you are choosing to do in the sinfulness of your own nature, and if that's you, all you can do is cry out, "God, save me from this miserable condition that I am in! God, I can't save myself. I haven't even had the desire to believe in You, let alone the ability to do it. God, if I am to be saved from such a wretched fate, You must save me," because Scripture says you must be born again, you must be born from above. God needs to do something to you because you can't do it on your own but you're responsible if you walk out in unbelief.

So beloved, my friends, Matthew has shown us beyond any doubt certified to us by the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the truthfulness of God's word, Jesus Christ is God's promised King. Jesus Christ is God's resurrected King. And Scripture tells us that he came to save sinners who were dead in trespasses and if you're dead, you need life from outside you, and what we find in the resurrection is that Christ has the power to impart life to those who cannot save themselves, and so I urge you, I beg you, ask you, in the name of Christ I command you, whatever spirit it is that might appeal to your heart as the Spirit of God works within you, come to this resurrected Christ. Bow before him. He commands you as we read earlier, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." And the consequences are great. Beloved, those of us that have bowed the knee to Christ and, as it were, grabbed hold of his feet in worship and submission, oh, the magnitude of the glory. We will rise with him on that final day. Death holds no fear for us because Scripture says that if Christ is raised from the dead, all of those who are in Christ will be raised from the dead also. Everything that happened to Christ in the resurrection and the ascension into glory is ours also. Ephesians 2, he has raised us up and seated us in the heavenly places with Christ. Oh, it's awesome. But refuse him and understand that you'll go to the pit with Satan himself.

So I implore you, my friend, come with all your heart to Christ. Ask him for mercy that you don't deserve and may the Spirit of God work in your heart, make you willing, impart this life to you on this very day.

Let's bow together in prayer.

*O Christ, You're not physically with us that we could actually grab hold of Your feet, Your literal feet, but in our hearts we incline ourselves in that direction to You. We see that You stand as the great and resurrected One, the One to whom all authority is given, the One who has the keys to life and death, the One who has conquered the grave. We are awestruck by the majesty of Your being and the majesty of what You have done, and so in our hearts, O Christ, we do fall at Your feet, we do bow our heads low, we lay hold of Your feet and we worship You, we honor You from that position of humility and gratitude and wonder and adoring praise. Have mercy, O Christ, just as You did on many of us, have mercy on those that are here and still dead in sin for which they are personally culpable. Have mercy on them and by Your Spirit work new life into them that they might come in a saving way to You, for we would not have anyone here lost, Father. It is a Gospel that is to be heard by all men. We pray that You would savingly apply it through the great work of Your Spirit to call men in the depths of their heart to saving faith even today, even now, Father, for You have the power of life in your hands. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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