

April 4, 2021

Four Scenes of the Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-10

This Jesus who was crucified – Is Alive!!!

LTS: 1 Cor. 15:1-8

Introduction:

Christ is Risen!...(Congregation: “He is Risen Indeed!”)

This Resurrection Sunday morning I stand in this pulpit to proclaim one message:
This Jesus who was Crucified -
Is Alive!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is that central moment in human history that proclaims and proves that Jesus Christ is Lord. In terms of importance, the Resurrection stands side-by-side with the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, justification by faith alone and all the other cardinal teachings of the Bible.

Apart from the resurrection, Christianity is just another lifeless, hopeless religion no better than any other man-made effort to define and reach God. As the apostle Paul wrote:

“...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain, and we are found to be false witnesses of God... (1 Cor. 15:14-19)

But with the bodily resurrection of Jesus at its epicenter, biblical Christianity breaks free from the thick milieu of lifeless, false religions and offers to all people the only trustworthy assurance of eternal life.

In our study of Romans chapter 1, we have been devouring like starving beggars the rich theological food Paul has been serving up. Paul loved all the doctrines of the Bible, but aside from the atoning cross of Christ, Paul may have loved the doctrine of resurrection above all else. In his N.T. letters I have counted nearly 55 times where he points to the necessity and benefits of the resurrection. In fact, you may remember that in Rom. 1:14 Paul described Jesus as a “descendant of David according to the flesh, [who] was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”

How can we know for certain that Jesus is the Son of God? Because he has risen from the dead!

On this Resurrection Sunday morning, however, I want us to step away from Paul’s letter to the Romans for a few minutes and just delight in a Gospel resurrection Narrative. Specifically, I want us to look at the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 28.

IN the first 10 verses of this chapter, I see four narrative scenes that comprise Matthew's testimony of Jesus' resurrection. But before we examine them, let's "give attention to the public reading of Scripture" by reading our text for the morning. Please stand with me as I read

Matt. 28:1-10...

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

² And 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. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, Just as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷

Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

May the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his word.

The first movement in this narrative of the resurrection is what we might call...

I. A Scene of Unrelenting Affection

1. It was Sunday morning, the 1st day of the week, and (as John tells us), it was still dark when the women came to the tomb. They had come not merely as broken-hearted mourners, but as devoted lovers of Jesus.

2. Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" (the mother of James and Joseph), had been faithful followers of Jesus to the end. They had served Jesus in Galilee and they had stood by His side at the cross. Now they were coming to perform a special act of service for the one they loved even though it was the third day since his death. This, beloved, is nothing less than a display of unrelenting affection. Even after his death, these women could not pry themselves away from him.

3. Mark tells us that they came to the tomb bearing special spices with which they hoped to anoint Jesus' body. They were the same kind of spices that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would have applied between the linen wrappings they used to embalm Jesus' body on the night of His death.

4. You may remember that Joseph and Nicodemus were in a bit of a hurry to take care of Jesus' body. Jesus had been crucified on Preparation Day (27:62), which was the official Jewish designation for Friday because it was the day before Sabbath. No work was allowed on the Sabbath so everything for the "weekend" (as we call it) had to be "prepared" on Friday. Hence the term "Preparation Day."

5. Joseph and Nicodemus had to get Jesus embalmed before the beginning of the Shabbat (Sabbath). That was going to be difficult since they received Jesus' body in mid-afternoon on Friday and they had to be done their work by sundown in keeping with the law. So, their time was extremely limited.

6. Not only that, but the sheer volume of spices and perfumes they brought to the tomb was enormous.

- A. In those days, not everyone who died was wrapped in perfume-packed strips of linen.
- B. If a man was poor, he might just be laid on the hard ground surrounded by stones and covered with dirt.
- C. If he was from the middle class (as we call it) he might be put onto a slab in a stone tomb where his body would eventually decay, and his bones could be gathered and put into a Ossuary in order to make room for someone else.
- D. If a man was fairly wealthy or had wealthy friends, he would be wrapped in linen strips (as Lazarus was). Those strips would be packed with various spices that would act as a very poignant perfume that would help mask the odor of death.
 - 1) In fact, it wasn't uncommon for rich man's body to be wrapped with about 50 pounds of this expensive perfume. It was a sign of honor. The more spices were added in the embalming process, the greater the honor to the deceased.
 - 2) When Jesus died, however, He was NOT buried on the surface of the hard ground or laid uncovered on a slab to eventually decay and have his bones put into a Ossuary. No, He was given a rich man's burial. In fact, when Nicodemus and Joseph prepared his body, they didn't use 50 pounds of spices... they used (according to Jn. 19:39) "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight."

7. And the John tells us that this was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, that the Messiah's "grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death" (Isaiah 53:9).

8. Magdalene and the other Mary knew how much perfume had been wrapped into Christ's burial cloths. According to 27:61, they had been sitting there just opposite the grave as Nicodemus and Joseph did their work. But to them 100 pounds of perfume was not enough to give appropriate honor the one they had come to love. So, they came back just as soon as the Sabbath was over, even before sunrise on the first day of the week, to honor Him; to declare by

the addition of their spices that Jesus is more worthy of sacrificial honor than even the greatest of kings.

9. I can't help but make the simple observation that these women would never had discovered the risen Christ if they had not decided to honor Him that morning. The privilege of being the first to discover His miraculous resurrection was given to them simply because they were the ones who showed up. Their deep affection and devotion drove them to him, even after his death. Such was the depth of their love.

- A. The mark of a true child of God has never been religious activity. Rather, it has always been a heart that loves Jesus. In John 8:42 Jesus tells the Pharisees by declaring, "If God were your Father, you would love me. Do you love Jesus Christ? Is it your ambition to live for him and please him?"
- B. To those who love Jesus, God delights to give all the spiritual treasures that spring from the resurrection.

10. And such were the two Mary's. They came to the tomb in broken-hearted affection but left the grave in the ecstasy of resurrection joy!

So, the first scene was A Scene of Unrelenting Affection. Second, we have...

II. A Scene of Angelic Visitation

Read v 2-6

And 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. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

1. This is the second time in three days Jerusalem had been shaken by an earthquake. And both were directly related to God's enormous power directed toward earth.

- A. The first was when Jesus was on the cross. Just before he died God caused the light of the sun to be blotted out and then sent a violent earthquake in a massive, unmistakable display of sovereign displeasure.
- B. But here you get the sense that God sent the second earthquake as kind of a rock-splitting display of sovereign joy.
- C. The Son of God had conquered death and sin, the ramifications of which would indeed be earth-shaking.

2. Matthew tells us the earthquake was accompanied by a mighty angel of the Lord who, sent by God, came to Jesus' tomb and rolled the great stone away and sat down on top of it... to the utter horror of the soldiers guarding the tomb, and to the sheer delight (eventually) of the women who came to see Jesus.

3. And it's no wonder the soldiers were afraid. The angel's appearance was "like lightening, and his clothing as white as snow."

- A. "Lightening white" is not a typical description of white fabric. The only beings in the universe who shine with a lightening whiteness are those who have been in the very presence of God.
- B. On the mount of transfiguration, Jesus' appearance was changed so that He shined like lightening.
- C. And Moses, when he came down the mountain after receiving the 10 commandments, had to wear a veil over his face so as not to scare the people because it shined for having been in God's presence.

4. Matthew tells us (4) that the guards shook for fear and became like dead men.

- A. The Greek here gives the impression that these men were so terrified of this heavenly being that they fell to the ground and shook until they passed out!
- B. And the women were afraid, too. In fact, John tells us that Mary Magdalene didn't hang around to hear what the angel had to say. She saw the empty tomb and took off running to tell Peter and the others that someone had taken Jesus' body.
- C. But the other Mary and the women with her stayed behind and got to see the angel and hear his message.

Read 5-6. The angel says,

Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, just as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

5. Note that the angel had nothing to say to the soldiers. As far as he was concerned, they could just lay there on the ground and quiver. But to these precious women he says, "Don't be afraid. The angel knew why they were there. And God has sent the angel to deliver a message. Jesus is no longer in the tomb, but no one has stolen His body

6. Mark tells us that another angel also appeared and invited the women inside the tomb to see for themselves. There would have been no mistaking what they saw. With 100 pounds of Aloe and Myrrh pressed between the strips of cloth, it would have been lying there like a stiff, empty cocoon. John even tells us the face covering had been neatly rolled up and set aside... probably so everyone could see that whoever had been inside was no longer there.

7. The angel then, knowing that seeing is not always believing, appealed to the very words of Jesus to explain what was happening. He says (6) that “He has risen (listen carefully) just as He said.”

8. Let those word ring deep in your soul! Jesus had repeatedly told his disciples all about his divinely inspired mission long before His death

- A. In Luke’s Gospel, the angel said, “Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?”
- B. Again (Matt. 12) The Pharisees demanded a sign and Jesus said, “...just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mat. 12:39-40).
- C. Again (Mat 16:21) “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”
- D. Luke explains that when the angel reminded the women of these things, “Then they remembered Jesus’ words...” (Lk. 24:8).
- E. Five times in the inspired record Jesus explicitly says that he would go to Jerusalem where he would be killed and rise gain. In other words, it all happened “Just as He Said.”

9. You see, my friend, Jesus didn’t die merely because the religious authorities in Jerusalem hated Him. No! Jesus died on the cross to fulfill the Father’s plan to bring salvation to all who would believe.

10. In fact, at Pentecost, when Peter stood up to preach that first sermon, he explained:

“This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Act. 2:23-24).

11. You see, every detail of Jesus death and resurrection were so many elements of the saving Mission the Father had established for his Son before the world began. His sovereign hand orchestrated everything to the praise of His glory and to the salvation of all who would believe. And it all happened, “Just as He said.”

12. Friends, Jesus is not like you and me. He is God in flesh. He is the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the end. He knows the end from the beginning not because He is smart enough to figure it out, but because His invisible hand of providence orchestrates all things to accomplish all God’s holy will. So we can trust in this: that in one sense or another EVERYTHING is “Just as He said.”

13. Before the women leave, the angel gives them an assignment. We have reviewed the Scene of **Unrelenting Affection**, the Scene of **Angelic Visitation**. Now we come to...

III. A Scene of Gospel Proclamation

Read 7-8

Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

1. We can hardly begin to imagine what this little group of women were experiencing. Their emotions were all over the place! Matthew mentions two; namely Fear and Joy. Fear no doubt, because the death of Jesus had to have been the most devastating experience of their lives! And Joy because they just got to interact with an angel from heaven! And joy also because of the message he delivered. And fear also because it was too good to be true and they didn't want to be disappointed all over again!

2. But they didn't have time to process any of that. They were told to go so they took off running! The text says they “departed quickly!” They were on a very real and important mission and they wasted no time fulfilling it!

- A. Before we finish up I want to make another observation. Everywhere Jesus and the true Gospel went, women were elevated. Did you notice that in these 10 verses not a single man played an active role in the story?
- B. We just mentioned how God providentially governs over and moves all things to accomplish his holy will. We have to conclude that only women were at the tomb on Easter Sunday morning because that was the will of God. He wanted the two Mary's and a few other women NOT mentioned in this text, to be the first to know. Isn't that interesting?
- C. And do we remember the person to whom Jesus first explicitly revealed that He was Messiah? It was to the woman at the well.
- D. In fact, there was a group of women who traveled with Jesus and his disciples. And here, under the authority of the resurrected Christ, the two Mary's were the first to see the empty tomb, the first to see the angel, the first to see the resurrected Christ, and the only ones sent to go – like the shepherds in Bethlehem – to announce the Good News! In fact, the news that they bore would prove greater than the disciples could believe!
- E. In a sense, these women were the first to proclaim the good news! Now I'm not saying that, “therefore women should preach, or hold the office of evangelist in the church.” I'm only saying that Jesus never treated women as if they were second-class

Christians. And we rejoice in that. And much more could be said. But the story isn't over.

3. we have reviewed the scene of **Unrelenting Affection**, the Scene of **Angelic Visitation**; the scene of **Gospel Proclamation**, and finally,

IV. The Scene of Worshipful Elation

Read 9-10

1. It must have been absolutely amazing to realize you have just spoken to an angel. It must have been earth-shattering to them to hear that Jesus had risen as he said. But nothing could prepare them for what was about to happen.

2. As they were running to find the disciples, Jesus suddenly meets them on the path. He knew they were coming, and they were right on time. And as soon as they see him, they collapsed at his feet.

3. They spent NOT one millisecond on what they should say or how they should greet him. They simply fell at his feet and took hold of him. And I suspect they wept and cried great wales of elation and joy!

4. They must have had a thousand questions for him!

- How can it be that you are alive?
- We were at the cross! We saw you die! How can this be?
- What does it mean?
- Where do we go from here?

5. There would be time for such questions, but for now, Jesus simply says, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee (probably Capernaum) and there they will see me."

6. In my mind, as I imagine the women kneeling with their faces in the grass and clinging to the resurrected Christ, I can't help but see what Paul tells us will happen in the eschatological future: Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

7. Isn't this a wonderful gospel narrative of the resurrection? And this message is for you and for your children ...

8. Let me end with a few relevant facts:

- Confucius' Tomb - occupied.
- Buddha's tomb – Occupied
- Mohamed's tomb – Occupied
- Jesus' Tomb – Empty

9. So, friends, I stand in this pulpit on this Resurrection Sunday to deliver the same message the women delivered to the disciples.

This Jesus, who was crucified,
Is alive!

He is Risen!... He is Risen indeed!