

Sermons on Matthew He is Risen from the Dead

Matthew 28:1-8

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
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Now __after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene __and the other Mary came 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 __from the door, and sat on it. ⁻³⁻ __His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁻⁴⁻ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like __dead *men*.

⁻⁵⁻ But the angel answered and 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 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 indeed _He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”

⁻⁸⁻ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word (Matthew 28:1-8).

Introduction

Wisdom is introduced in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs in a personal form—“**I, wisdom, dwell with prudence**” (Proverbs 8:12). Wisdom cries out on the top of a “**high hill**” (Proverbs 8:2). “**She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city**” (Proverbs 8:3). “**Wickedness is an abomination**” to the “**lips**” of wisdom (Proverbs 8:7). It is by the wisdom of God that “**kings reign and rulers decree justice**” (Proverbs 8:15). And wisdom will be found by those who “**diligently**” seek her (Proverbs 8:17).

This anthropomorphic (ascribing human attributes to something that is not human) expression of wisdom culminates with a statement articulating the eternal watershed.

For whoever finds me finds life, and u obtains favor from the LORD; ³⁶ but he who sins against me w wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death (Proverbs 8:35, 36).

Is it not necessary to conclude that wisdom is an expression of God Himself? In the same way that Jesus is Truth (John 14:6), God is Wisdom. To reject wisdom is to reject the God from whom the wisdom is generated.

To reject the wisdom which flows from the God “**who alone is wise**” (Jude 25), is to reject God Himself. To find wisdom is to find life; those who hate wisdom love death. God sets this decision before men.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* _I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Though we may (and ought to) recognize that it is only by the grace of God that men would choose life rather than death, the onus on man is not alleviated. Man is fully culpable to make the right choice—to choose wisdom, God and life—and recognize that death is an enemy from which we have no safe haven apart from the grace of God in the cross of Christ.

Why do I mention all this as we approach this passage which Calvin called “the closing scene of our redemption”? I mention this because we live in precarious times. Whether it is humanistic philosophers seeking to extricate any mention of God from our culture’s dialogue, or legislators operating from a disposition of self-deification in their constitutional enactments, it is important for us to know they (and perhaps we too) have forgotten: those who hate God and His wisdom, love death.

As a college instructor I would enter into spirited theological dialogue with students. One student, with whom I had friendly yet vehement disagreement, sprinted into my presence with exciting news—the Hubble telescope had incontrovertibly proven (somehow) that God didn’t exist (incontrovertible proof, by the way, that has since been controverted via the weak and shifting sands of prejudicial, eisegetic empiricism).

Nonetheless, my question to him was simple. Why was he excited to discover he had no hope past the grave? Why was the victory of death such good news? To his credit he didn’t seek to answer the question. Perhaps the horror of his champion had hit him (I pray it had), that he had been defending his greatest enemy—and in doing so he had been wronging his own soul.

To what extent people know they love death is hard to say. Sin is a great blinder. But let us make sure that we know our enemy, and that we know and present our true champion and the means by which His victory

is obtained. It would be nothing less than a profanation of the gospel of Christ if our efforts were merely philosophical or legislative. Changing laws or winning in public sophistry can easily become a violation of the Third Commandment (taking God's name in vain) if we fail to recognize the chief message to which all dialogues are to point—the resurrection of Christ.

I challenge you and challenge myself that every time we open our mouths on behalf of the Christ, whether we speak of laws, ethics or methods of life, that our chief end is the glory of God in the cross of Christ. To win the culture and lose the cross is to lose both. We must remember that those who oppose you (assume you're an ambassador for Christ) love death to the destruction of their own soul. And their only hope is the Good News which compelled these women to run from the tomb with fear and great joy.

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Women at the Tomb

A historical analysis of the place of women in first century Israel would help us appreciate the scene. It was very much a male dominated society. And though it would be an error (as many have made) to view the presence of women at the tomb as an overturning of the restriction of officers in the church to men, it is, at the same time, significant to note that the women are not restricted from playing a vital role in relaying vital information in light of the fleeing apostles (Matthew 26:56).

Here we also see the patience of Christ in the face of error. Had he not numerous times conveyed that He would rise again on the third day (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19)? Why then would they come to the grave, as Mark tells us, to anoint His dead body with spices (Mark 16:1)? Why were they seeking **“the living among the dead” (Luke 24:5)?** I don't want to be mistakenly understood as one who promotes ignorance, but as one who recognizes the inevitability of it. Those who come to Christ with true

saving faith (which itself is a gift of God) will never be turned away due to error—they will have their error continually corrected.

How quickly these women would have dispensed of those burial spices when corrected by the living Christ. Let us rejoice in knowing that God receives us even in our ignorance, while at the same time receive that loving correction whereby which we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

An Angel

At Christ's conception an angel appeared to Joseph (Matthew 2:20) as well as to Zacharias (the father of John the Baptist—Luke 1) and to shepherds at Christ's birth (Luke 2). Here an angel appears again. The earthquake once again reminds us of the temporal and subordinate trustworthiness of things that can be "shaken" (Hebrews 12:27).

The angel's appearance is like lightning (expressing glory) and snow (expressing purity). He didn't stand in some imposing posture, as if to raise his hand to strike; his mere presence transformed Roman soldiers, who were no doubt able warriors, into fearful statues. It may have been Matthew's desire to be poetic or ironic that men who were to guard a dead body became themselves like dead men. No more is said of them for now. They, no doubt, remained in a state of frightened stupefaction.

The next words are addressed to the women.

But the angel answered and 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 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 indeed _He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

⁻⁸⁻ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word (Matthew 28:5-8).

Seeking Jesus

It is those who would faithfully seek Jesus that receive the words of comfort—“**Do not be afraid**”. While the guards sit in paralytic mortification, the women are comforted. There is good fear and there is bad fear. John writes:

-There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ⁻¹⁹⁻ __We love __Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:18, 19).

It is an ungodly fear to live under the continual impression that God may be the source of your judgment and torment. Assurance is to be sought. John will later write:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

But it is foolish to assume from this that all fear of God is immediately jettisoned. The women will run from this scene with fear and great joy—the two are compatible. We should be careful never to think that salvation has been procured through a change in the nature of God who is a Judge—a devouring, tempestuous and Consuming Fire (Psalm 50:3; Isaiah 66:15).

A godly fear might be compared to standing in the eye of the tornado—untouched and untouchable, yet not ignorant of the power by which you’re surrounded.

He is Risen

The angel then gives the basis by which all fear is vanquished—“**He is risen**” (Matthew 28:6). He then adds “**as He said**” as perhaps a gentle reminder of the faithful of the great promise which Jesus had repeatedly made.

Demonstrating that this was no merely metaphor, the angel then instructs the women to take a look at the “**place where the Lord lay**”. Jesus is not merely living on in your hearts; He is alive—in the flesh. This is not

living on in our memories, it is not reincarnation, and it is not becoming a drop in the vast sea of souls.

Jesus conquered the death that corrupts our souls and destroys our bodies. We, the Scriptures teach, will be resurrected as He was resurrected (2 Corinthians 4:14). We will be given new and immortal and incorruptible bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53). That God accepted the blood of Christ is shines forth in that He was **“raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:15).**

Our enemy—the one that breaks every last heart—that boney finger of death that sits at the end our gate—mercilessly breaking out hearts—always creeping closer to our doors—staggers when confronted with the redeeming blood of Christ.

I will ransom them from the __power of __the grave; I will redeem them from death. _O Death, _I will be your plagues! O __Grave, __I will be your destruction! _Pity is hidden from My eyes.” (Hosea 13:14).

Let us, in light of this glorious news, take rank with the heavenly host and sing a new song to the Lamb:

**You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And __have redeemed us to God __by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,...
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing (Revelation 5:9, 12).**

This is the gospel. This is the message of God which is the power of salvation (Romans 1:16). This good news is the means by which God saves souls (Romans 10:14-17). Every message which proceeds from our lips must subordinate to this message—even further, every message must preambule this most supreme message.

The manifold blessings of God’s redemptive power will extend into every nook and cranny of His creation, but the risen Christ is the sole fountain of every blessing. It is for this reason we come to the Lord’s Table—that we might, in unison, proclaim His body broken and His blood shed—the acceptable sacrifice which has destroyed death and brought us into joyful union with the God whom we now call Father.

Questions for Study

1. Discuss the attributes of wisdom (pages 2, 3).
2. How is wisdom an anthropomorphism? Explain (pages 2, 3)?
3. What do we know of those who hate God (pages 2, 3)?
4. Why do you think the women were the ones who went to the tomb (pages 4, 5)?
5. What did the women know or not know about Christ? What do we learn of Christ's patience here (pages, 4, 5)?
6. Who receives the words of comfort (page 6)?
7. Discuss the fear of God. Is it good or bad (page 6)?
8. On what basis is our fear removed (pages 6, 7)?
9. How important is the resurrection (pages 6, 7)?