THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Matthew 28:1-20

Key verse: 28:6

“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”

Good morning everyone. We’re here to celebrate Resurrection Sunday! Now for some people, Easter Sunday is about the Easter Bunny, colorfully decorated Easter eggs, and Easter egg hunts. However, today I’d like for us to talk about facts not fiction. The fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and that His resurrection demonstrates that we can indeed be promised an eternal home in Heaven by receiving Jesus as our Savior. The title of my message today is “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

We message has two parts:

Part 1 – He Has Risen (verses 1-15)

Part 2 – Go and Make Disciples (verses 16-20)

Part 1: He Has Risen

Verse 1 says, “After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.” The Sabbath day was the 7th day of the week. It ended at sunset on Saturday. Then the first day of the week started. At dawn Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who was the mother of James and Joses, came to the grave. They had prepared spices for Jesus’ body. These women had been faithful and devoted followers of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. They were present at both the crucifixion of Jesus and also watched his body be buried.

While heading to the burial site of Jesus, the two women were wondering how the stone at the tomb entrance would be removed. Mark 16:2-3 says, “Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb; and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. He was a very strong angel, for he went to the tomb, rolled the heavy stone away from the entrance, and sat on it. He wanted the two women to see that the tomb was empty. The guards who were supposed to secure the tomb were terrified. They were so overcome by fear that they passed out. The Bible says that they became like dead men.

Look at verse 5: The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. The women were looking for the dead body of Jesus, but to their surprise it wasn’t there. Just imagine the wave of emotions the two Mary’s must have been feeling. In the timeframe of 24 hours, they witnessed their Lord Jesus crucified, buried and now his body was gone. Let’s look at what verse 6 says, “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.” Jesus knew that His death must happen. It was necessary in God’s plan to save the world. However, the resurrection validates who Jesus claimed to be, namely, the Son of God and Messiah. The resurrection also showed Jesus' victory over death. From the time of Adam's sin, death has ruled over mankind. No matter how great a person is, they will eventually die. No one could defeat death.

Elizabeth Parrish is the founder of an American biotech company called BioViva Sciences. The company’s mission is to extend the life expectancy of human beings through gene therapy. Essentially, they want to stop human aging and help people to live forever. But, human death is inevitable. No one can prevent it with technology, drugs, money, education, exercise, or anything else. But according to God’s Word, why do people die? Romans 6:23a says “For the wages of sin is death” And Hebrews 9:27 says “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”. But there is good news that God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus satisfied God's justice fully through his death and resurrection (Rom. 4:25). His resurrection confirmed that his death was a natural death like all other men, but also an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Jn. 2:3). Death had no claim on Jesus. God raised Jesus by his mighty power. Jesus won an eternal victory over the power of sin and death.

For me personally, the resurrection of Christ means that I have a living hope. I’m forgiven of my sins and justified before God which gives me tremendous hope. I’m no longer an enemy of God who was bound for hell, but instead I’ve received an eternal inheritance in heaven that can never be taken away from me. When I was younger in my 20s and 30s, I lived a very fearless and careless lifestyle and placed my hope and confidence in myself and my circumstances. But as I mature in Christ, I’ve realized now that I can’t rely on myself; when I do, I’m only fooling myself. For God can’t be fooled.

Let’s go to verse 7, the angel said “Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." Good news must be told quickly. This was the best news in the world. It was the news that good conquered evil; life conquered death; love conquered hate. Jesus has risen! They must go and tell his disciples, who were hiding themselves because of fear. For their Master had been arrested and killed by the authority. The women faithfully obeyed the angel’s command and they ran with excitement to tell the disciples that their Lord Jesus Christ had risen. Then, suddenly Jesus appeared to them and he said “Hello”. Mary and Mary Magdalene immediately fell before Jesus, clasped his nailed marked feet and worshiped their Lord. Imagine, what an awesome moment it must be! And how joyful and thankful they must be! However, Jesus lost no time. Just like the angel, Jesus told them not to be afraid. Before meeting the Risen Christ, these women were filled with overwhelming despair and grief. But when they encountered the Risen Jesus, no longer were they swallowed up by the power of grief and death, but found new hope and absolute joy.

So, I’m curious...what does Jesus’ resurrection mean to you?

I’m sure that probably all of us at one time have asked ourselves "Who am I? Why am I alive? What will happen to me when I die?" The resurrection of Jesus solves our identity problem. I will explain why. God created Adam in his image, so that he might know God and have a love relationship with God, enjoying him and glorifying him. But when Adam sinned, he ran away from God and hid himself behind a tree. He was afraid of God, and he became fearful and anxious and sad. He was confused, losing his identity and purpose of life. Even though he still was in the Garden of Eden, he was not happy at all, all because of his sin. Sin means missing a target, God’s creation purpose. And the wages of sin is death. (Ro 6:23a) We no longer need to wonder who we are in despair, sorrow and fear, asking, “Who am I? Why am I here?” For Jesus Christ, and His resurrection from the dead, has provided the answer, because through his death and resurrection, he has defeated the power of sin and death. In the Risen Christ, we now realize that we are created in the image of God with a clear purpose of life. Along with identity comes a genuine purpose for living. Instead of living life without any real purpose, we can now know the reason we have been created - to love God and enjoy Him forever. We not only know who we are, we know why we are here. That is why the message of the Resurrection is hope, joy and freedom because sin and death is defeated. Jesus changes us from the inside-out and frees us from all fears, the bondage of death. As true followers of Christ, we are free from the fear of death because our Lord Jesus Christ conquered sin and death! Praise the Risen Christ! Amen!

Let’s look at verse 11, “While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.” The guards at the grave now had a problem. They were there to make sure that the disciples did not steal the body of Jesus and they had done their duty. The grave had remained closed until that angel came but the body was gone. The priests were desperate because they didn’t want anyone to know the truth, that Jesus rose from the dead. Verses 12 and 13 says, “When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'” The guards who failed to secure Jesus’ tomb were bribed by the chief priests to lie and falsely report that Jesus’ disciples stole His body during the night.

As we look at the two Mary’s vs. chief priests, both groups know the facts, that Jesus’ body was no longer inside the tomb and that Jesus had risen. Now, the women believed what the angel had said “He has risen from the dead”. They felt great joy and wanted to share their excitement with others. In contrast, the chief priests did not want to believe it was true that Jesus had risen from the dead because they despised Him. Even though they had all the evidence they needed to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, they decided not to believe. This shows us that belief does not organically arise in a person simply from a set of evidence. They must decide to believe based on God’s Word.

Now the chief priests bribed the guards and promoted a lie that the disciples had stolen the body. However, their actions could not cancel the good news. Rather, their efforts to cover up the fact of Jesus’ resurrection became evidence of its truth. The evidence is all there. But the decision to believe must be ours. Even with all the evidence there, some people cannot make a decision to choose between the truth and the lie. I accept Jesus who died for my sins and rose again. I accept him by faith. By faith I accept Jesus’ promise to forgive my sins and come to live in my heart. To avoid making a decision to believe is to make a decision by default not to believe. To believe that God raised Jesus from the dead is to know that our sins are forgiven. It is to believe that Jesus is alive and is with us. It is to become a witness to Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Part 2: Go and Make Disciples

Then, the 11 disciples went to a mountain in Galilee. We do not know which mountain it was, but Jesus had told them where they would meet him. When they saw Jesus at a distance, they worshipped him but some of the disciples doubted if it was really Him. Maybe they thought that he was a spirit and not a real man. But look at verse 18-20, Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." These are Jesus’ last words spoken on Earth before he was taken up into heaven. Let’s take a moment to better understand this Great Commission.

First, Jesus told them that God had given to him *all authority over heaven and earth*. So, what does it mean that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth? All authority in Heaven and Earth describes the sovereignty of Jesus and His unstoppable mission. Jesus has the authority to forgive our sins. He has the authority to judge us. Jesus also has the authority to give us eternal life. To acknowledge Jesus’ authority means that we must worship him and obey him. When we obey him and do what he tells us to do, his authority backs us up. Sometimes people say, “How can you teach the Bible? Did you go to Bible college or seminary school?” The command of Jesus, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, is our authority. If we teach his word as it is, that is enough. We baptize those who ask for baptism by the authority of Jesus who commanded it.

Second, Jesus said, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.”* Jesus wants people of every tribe and language and nation to belong to him and worship him. There are only two groups of people in the world: those who know that God loves them and have accepted Jesus as their Savior, and those who do not know God or his Son Jesus and are still living in bondage to sin. So, Jesus commands his disciples, to go out and make disciples. How do we make disciples?

Jesus mentions two things. First he says, baptize them. Jesus said, *“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* When I am baptized I declare to the world that I am a Christian. Baptism represents repentance and a commitment to Jesus and to a body of believers which the Bible calls his church. No one can grow without making a commitment. Baptism also represents repentance. John the Baptist baptized those who repented of sin. Repentance is confessing our sins and turning from them. Jesus forgives repentant sinners. When we repent, we die with Jesus and accept his forgiveness. Baptism symbolizes our union with Christ in his death. It symbolizes our union with him in his resurrection and the beginning of a new life.

The second thing that we must do to make disciples is teach them to obey. *“Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* This means that we must study and teach the Bible and put it into practice ourselves. A disciple of Jesus is a learner. Bible study is not just done with the head. We must learn from God’s word and we must obey with our hands and feet and hearts and minds. We must not only be born again, but also we must grow up in Jesus. I must study the Bible and live by it; I must teach the Bible to others and help them to obey it. Jesus himself set the example. So Jesus said to anyone who wants to be his disciple: “Deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow me.” (Lk 9:23) Only a good disciple of Jesus can be a good disciple-maker.

Now, Jesus not only gave us a command. He also gave us a promise. Lastly, Jesus’ promise. *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* It is a promise fulfilled by the coming of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for those who obey this command of his. Jesus does not just give an impossible command then take off to heaven. He promised to be with us, every day in every way.

When I think about the ‘*Great Commission*’ in the Bible, it's a command from Jesus to have a mission mindset, attitude and lifestyle. God has called us all to proclaim the gospel and make disciples to a certain group of people. Whether that means he leads you to go to Brazil like M. Paulina Park, who’s heading to Sao Paulo on Tuesday; or to serve and mentor university students in Toronto or to teach the good news concerning Christ and the way of salvation to our co-workers. As true followers of Christ, we all have a call and a mission field to serve. As for me, I’m truly amazed at how Jesus has patiently grown me into one of his true disciples over the last 6 years. By following my life key verse Luke 9:23, God has blessed me with an amazing God-fearing wife, a good job, a new house and two growing disciples in Bamidele and Kane. All this is a result of denying myself and living to please my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and obeying His Word.

I thank you God for giving me the opportunity to share this message with you today. I pray that I continue to be committed to serving lost souls and living as a disciple-maker for Jesus. I pray that we all come to believe and trust in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the foundation of our faith, the light of life as we inspire others to live for Jesus and a source of hope as we patiently wait for Christ who promises to come again.

Let’s read verse 6 one more time:

“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”