

He Has Risen, As He Said
Matthew 28:1-20

Tolkien, the famous writer (Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, etc) wrote an essay called “On Fairy Stories.”

In it, he tries to get at the appeal of fantasy. Why do people love fiction/fantasy? (Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Harry Potter, etc?)

- He says **there’s something in the human heart that deeply desires several things.**
- Keller’s summary of this essay is this: We desire...
 - **to escape from time**
 - **to escape from death**
 - **to have love without parting**
 - **to communicate with non-human beings**
 - **to see good triumphing over evil**
- Any story that realistically and artistically depicts these things captivates us.

We want these things Why?

- Atheists have their own explanation.
- **Christians believe at a deep level that this is the life we were made for.**
- We were not made to die. We were not made to see evil triumphing.

Good News: **If Jesus Christ was really raised from the dead, through faith in him, you will literally have those things.**

- You will escape death, step out of time, have love without parting, see good triumphing over evil and dwell with God forever.
- That’s amazing.

We live in a world now of death and separation and evil.

The gospel fulfills the deepest longings of the human heart.

- Tolkien, “The Gospels contain a fairystory, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories... and among its marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe [happy ending].
- “Christianity is the true myth” as Lewis said.

If you’re **not a Christian**, don’t you want these things?

- I invite you to consider the story of redemption.
- At least check out whether or not Jesus was resurrected from the dead?

Christians, is this story inciting wonder and awe in your heart today?

Matthew’s good news is what we will look at today. It is good news for two big reasons:

- (1) He wants you to know the facts about what happened, and his account bears all the marks of authenticity.
- This is not a fantasy.

- He wants you to know it's true.

(2) He wants you to see the grace of Jesus.

- It's one thing for this story to be true; but what if you couldn't receive all these wonderful things? (eternal life; love without parting, etc).
- But you can.
- Not by trying harder and doing better, but by grace.

Matthew 28 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.

It begins with the **greatest news** and ends with the **greatest mission**.

Matthew also links many of the first scenes of his gospel with this last scene.

He links Christmas with Easter!

- At his birth, "Immanuel, God with us" (1:23).
 - Here, "I am with you always."
- At his birth, Jesus is called "king of the Jews" (2:2).
 - Here, "All authority ... has been given to me."
- At his birth, wise men come from Gentile lands to worship Jesus.
 - Here, the disciples worship and Jesus sends them to the Gentiles.

It's a wonderful conclusion.

A Bodily Resurrection is how this majestic book ends.

- Most biographies end with a funeral. But not the story of Jesus.
- Think about them in the Bible...
- Genesis ends w/ Joseph's death. Deuteronomy ends w/ Moses' death. Joshua ends w/ Joshua's death. The Gospels end w/ Jesus' resurrection.
- **And for all who are in Christ, our story doesn't end with a funeral.**
- **The funeral is just the beginning of life!**
 - o (Bonhoeffer said this before execution, after leading a study on Isa 53, 1 Pet 1)

Jesus was crucified three days earlier –

- He was the leader of this lightly organized movement.
- He was crucified publicly and shamefully.
- His followers covered in fear *before* and *during* this crucifixion. (Yesterday, women)
- But afterward, instead of disintegrating, **the movement exploded!**

What happened?

**Jesus stepped out into the sunlight on Sunday morning
as the victorious and vindicated Son of God!!!**

- His followers were transformed.
- This little movement in rural Galilee has now come all the way to the Triangle!
- The church building is closed, but the tomb is empty.
- And because of this, wherever you're at, you have reason to celebrate.

Let's look at Matthew's account together; we can walk through it in five parts.

#1: The Witnesses Jesus Uses (28:1-10)

1: In this case, it is two women.

The gospels don't say that this took place on the third day, but the first day of the week.

- Why? The writers indicate a shift to **something new!**
- **It's the dawning of a new creation! It's a word of glorious hope.**
- Sunday was the first day of the week.
- From this time on, the first day of the week becomes the day believers have set aside for worship (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).
- Some today say, "I can't believe in resurrection because those things don't happen."
Exactly! That's why it's a big deal!
 - It is the dawning of a new creation! Something radically new has happened.

Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary"

- V. 56, 61, they were at the cross and tomb.
- Now, they come to view the tomb.
- Not **that they thought they could do anything to change his death.**
- They were there because they loved him.
- They were **not** anticipating resurrection.
- But **they went on loving Jesus even in the darkness!**
- There's a tenacity and commitment here.
- **V. 5:** "you are seeking Jesus who was crucified." That's a wonderful compliment.
- Mary Magdalene had seven demons previously! But Jesus changed her.
- **#JesusChangedMyLife** — she had a tremendous testimony, as do all believers.

2-4: It looks like the angel is the reason for the earthquake – notice the "**for**"

- **It's kind of like a wedding... many want to do it up big – dresses, tux, special meal, dancing.... You do it in style because it's a big moment.**
 - Graduation – cap, gown; PhD dissertation – special paper.
- Well, when it comes to the resurrection of God's own Son, the announcement comes with some real style and beauty and power.
 - It merits an earthquake; it merits an angel.
- These guards are paralyzed with fear.
- They might have anticipated some opposition; but this was something all together different!

5-8: The focus of the angel, though, is not with the guards, but these ladies.

The ladies become the premier witnesses of the resurrection.

- Diétrich points out that "Three elements, nevertheless, are common to all four Gospels—the empty tomb, the announcement of the Resurrection to the women, and the meeting of the disciples with the Risen One."

5-6a: The angel reminds them of the words of Jesus, "**just as he said.**"

- You can trust the words of Jesus!
- He had made this prediction already.

- His followers may not have anticipated it, but He did!

6b: They're invited to see inside.

- God raises the dead.
- 2 Cor 1:8-9

7: They get their instructions.

8: They obey the instructions ... with "fear and joy"

- "That they went *with fear* indicates that they were in the grip of the awe that had been aroused in them by their contact with the visitant from another world. But they were not simply scared; they went with *great joy*. They had come to that place mourning the death of their great leader and dear friend; they went away knowing that he was dead no longer." (Morris)

9: Jesus met them, and they worship.

- They meet someone more majestic than the angel!
- They take hold of his feet, an act of homage.
- Real feet... this was not some wild vision but reality: Jesus was alive bodily and then Matthew says, "they worshiped him."

10: Jesus repeats the instructions of the angel.

So here is the task for the ladies: Go tell the disciples that Jesus has risen and they can meet up with him in Galilee.

I think we see a bit of God's humor here.

- The testimony of women was regarded by most Jews and the Mediterranean world as not highly regarded.
- You had to have better than women!
- That sounds awful today (and it is!) but that's a fact of history.
- And yet, **Jesus uses them as his premier witnesses.**
- He uses a **lady who was formerly possessed by demons!**
- Jesus tends to turn human conventions on their heads! (1 Cor 1-2)

Application: Two Great Encouragements That Builds Our Most Holy Faith

A. This Account Bears the Marks of Authenticity (and there are more to follow)

i. The Women's Witness

- This is an important historical detail that gives credibility to the gospel writer's accounts.
- They gained nothing by reporting this, and they do, because this is the way it happened.

ii. Not Anticipating the Resurrection!

- They were not expecting this, nor were the disciples!

- A lot of people say, “These were primitive people; gullible, first century people. We modern people can’t believe in miracles.”
- But these disciples weren’t ready to believe in this miracle any more than modern man, **perhaps less!**
- No one said, “Hey, it’s the third day. Shouldn’t we go take a look? It can’t hurt!” Not one disciple!
- **These ladies have to go get the disciples!**
 - Then later, in the John’s account, we see them *hiding*.
 - That doesn’t look like gullible guys ready to believe anything?

B. Jesus can use you!

- He uses these ladies... these disciples.
- He uses all kinds of people.
- **He turns great sinners and great sufferers into great evangelists.**
 - Jesus offers you New Life, not some advice for a bit of self-improvement.
 - Maybe you have a past of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional), or some time of enslavement (addiction, demonic bondage, sinful relationship).
 - Be encouraged by this story.
- What is most important about a good witness is love for Jesus.
 - Often it’s the common, ordinary that Jesus uses (1 Cor 1:26-31) who overflow with adoration.

Many years ago a famous violinist died.

- Leaving behind no family members, there was no one to whom he could bequeath his Stradivarius.
- An auction was convened, in part, to sell the instrument.
- It was eventually purchased by another violinist.
- He paid twenty dollars for the violin, a sizeable sum in its day.
- Shortly thereafter the new owner of the Stradivarius announced that he would play a concert on his new violin.
- When the evening arrived the concert hall was filled to capacity.
- People were waiting in breathless anticipation.
- At just the right moment he walked out on stage with nothing but his violin and he began to play a composition of Paganini.
- He held the audience spell-bound.
- His technique was flawless.
- His tone was exquisite.
- At the conclusion of the final note, the audience instantaneously jumped to their feet and roared with applause.
- He bowed, simply, and walked off stage.
- A few seconds later, with the applause still thundering, he walked back on stage, took his violin by its neck, raised it over his head and smashed it on a nearby piano bench, shattering it into a thousand pieces.

- He then walked off the stage.
- The audience was horrified.
- They were stunned.
- A moment later a second man walked out on stage and stood before the people.
- They became very quiet as he spoke these words, “The violin on which the maestro has just performed his first selection, the same violin that he has just destroyed, was but a twenty-dollar violin.”
- He will now perform the rest of the concert on the twenty-thousand dollar Stradivarius.

The genius is never in the power of the violin. It is always in the violinist.

- And the same his true for Jesus’ witnesses.
- At best, we’re twenty dollar violins, but beautiful music is played when we are taken up in the hands of the heavenly violinist.
- Christ is everything; we are simply his instruments.

#2: The People Jesus Restores (28:10)

It’s just one little word that gives us massive hope: “**brothers**”

- 7-8: “disciples”
- V. 10. “Brothers”

26:56 – “they all left him and fled”

But Jesus calls them “**brothers.**”

- One word.
- This is Easter grace.
- **Maybe you are called by a particular name only among your family? It denotes intimacy and love.**
- One word makes a lot of difference. It reveals a lot.
- There’s only one guy in the world who can say to me, “**Son.**”
 - o And he lives in Kentucky. Sometimes that’s all it took for me to calm down.

Why this intimate word?

- Despite their failure, confusion and desertion, Jesus had not cast them away!
- His relationship with them was not destroyed.
- He wants the ladies to tell them that he still regarded them as brothers.

Imagine the scene... “Go tell “my brothers”...”

- Philip or John, “**Are you sure that’s what he said?**”
- Mark singles out **Peter** since his failure was so pronounced and since Mark’s gospel is essentially Peter’s gospel – Peter is stunned by Jesus’ grace

Mark 16

⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

John 20

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Jesus calls them family though he is about to ascend to the throne!

- He calls us family though we fail him!
- He's called them *servants*, *disciples*, and even *friends*.
- But here in these accounts he calls them "brothers."
- “He is not ashamed to call us brothers” (**Heb 2:12**);
- **Everyone in the world is longing for community, and this first Easter morning the ultimate community is identified. We now know it as *the church*.**
- **We are a family of brothers and sisters, who have been saved by the grace of Jesus.**
- **The same Jesus who continues to give us grace and mercy, day by day.**

Jesus doesn't call them “deserters,” or “whimps,” but “brothers.”

- He doesn't say, “**Tell those backstabbers to meet me in the parking lot at Galilee!**”
- Some of you may need to hear this today.

Do you look back on your discipleship with disgust because you failed Jesus, and you think you can never know his smile again?

- You're not some distant relative, Christian, you are his brother or sister.
- Let his restoring grace transform your heart.

They will put it together in due time and turn the world upside with the message of resurrection.

- The book of Acts shows how the resurrection is central in the apostles' message; and later in the epistles. (**Acts 2:31; 3:26; 4:2; 10:41; 13:33; 17:18**)

If you're not a Christian, you ask, “How do you get in on this?” By Faith.

Romans 4:21–25 (ESV): 22 That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” 23 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

- **We are justified, made right with God by faith.**
- **Jesus was raised for us to have this standing with God.**
- **By faith we are united with Christ.**
- **“Since you have been raised with Christ”**
- **Since we are united with Christ, we have assurance of our own resurrection.**
 - **We will receive a new body! (I'm getting bangs; I'll be in the band)**
 - **We will inherit a new earth!**
- **Our faith will end in sight, and we shall see him as he is!**

We live in a day in which people struggle with both the fear of death and the meaningless of life – but the resurrection solves both problems!

- It answers the question of life now, and life beyond the grave.
- You don't have to fear death because Christ has risen!
- You can have new life because Christ has risen.
- Your life does matter because Christ has risen!

#3: The Problem Jesus Causes (28:11-15)

Jesus' resurrection threw people into a frenzy.

- Some you remember "Deflate Gate" in football a few years ago?
- It was a controversy around Tom Brady ordering the deflation of footballs in a win over the Colts during the playoffs.

This is what you might call "Asleep-gate"

- Jesus resurrection resulted in a deceptive plan.

11: The guards tell the chief priests what happened.

12-15: The leaders think they have to make up some tale because they're trying to do damage control.

- They're the **spin-masters of Easter**.
- "Tell people the disciples stole the body.
- Matthew includes this story because the report had been going around.
- It was a common report during Matthew's day.
- Matthew wants the church to know that this is a false report!

- Matthew really wants you to know of the historical truth of the bodily resurrection.
 - "It doesn't really matter ..." many will say "what matters if you *believe* he did"
 - But it does matter!
 - If you're running down a diving board to jump into a pool, you don't someone saying to you, "It doesn't really matter if that pool has water in it or if it is empty; what matters if you believe there's water!"
 - No it matters. One causes a **happy splash; the other a deadly splat**.
- Matthew is eliminating a false explanation and highlighting the historic truth.

"While we were asleep."

- This is really weak isn't it.
- **It's hard to know what happened while you were sleeping!**
- How did they know? If they were asleep you don't know.
- **Further, it is hard to believe that all the guards were asleep at the same time.**
- **Surely one or two hadn't taken Ambien.**
- These would have been very good soldiers; they could've been executed for this.
- It doesn't hold water.
- Further, messing around with graves was an serious crime in the ancient world.

- It could result in the death penalty and there's no way at this point that these scared disciples would have taken that risk.

#4: The Worship Jesus Deserves (28:16-17)

A Meeting in Galilee (16-17)

The Time? We're not told exactly but we can piece some things together.

- This meeting was **after** the meeting on **the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24)**.
- And probably after his appearances to the disciples in **Jn 20** & the 7 in **Jn 21**.
- **Before his ascension in Acts 1.**
- This meeting took place **three or four weeks after the resurrection.**

The Group?

- Matthew doesn't say this meeting was **exclusively** with the eleven disciples.
- **It is quite possible that this is what Paul refers to when he says that Jesus appeared to "over 500 at one time" (1 Cor 15:6).**
- **Remember, Galilee was the where the majority of the followers were.**
- Later in **Jerusalem, only 120 gathered.** So it makes sense that the meeting with the 500 took place here in Galilee where there were more followers. .

The eleven had seen him but many had not. So some of them **"doubted."**

- **These on the hillside could have for the first time saw the risen Christ.**
- **And remember, he had a glorified body!**
- **They weren't the only ones having a hard time recognizing him! (Lk 24)**
- **It seems that they're simply trying to make sense of it all.**

Leon Morris, "It is difficult to think that the hesitation was coming from the eleven, considering all that had happened to them during the recent past."

"but some doubted" –The expression can simply denote hesitation, not opposition or firm unbelief.

- There is a **"virtuous doubt"** – a person seeking understanding. Thomas.
- There's a **"defensive doubt"** that denies the possibility of answers.
- The inclusion of this phrases is another mark of authenticity; if you're going to make something up, it's hard to imagine including this.
- **Matthew is a candid witness who puts it all out there: Some of these doubted.**
- **He's honest. He has nothing to hide.**

Worship: And this is where discipleship begins and continues!

- When the women saw the risen Jesus they **worshipped him (v. 9)**, and now others do the same (v. 17)...
 - The verb is used 13 times in Matthew.
 - Bookends: **Matt 2:2, 8, 11** and now **Matt 28:9, 17**

This is the response Jesus seeks.
This is the response Jesus deserves.
Fall down in wonder, love and praise of the risen Savior.

#5: The Commission Jesus Gives (28:18-20)

A. The Command: Make Disciples

Technically the one imperative of verse 19 is: “**make disciples.**”

- Not “make decisions” but **make disciples** of Jesus.
- **The goal is not to make some more nominal Christians!**

Tied to this imperative are **3 participles**: “going, baptizing and teaching.”

- **They function like imperatives.**

The mandate is clear: **make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching.**

The sweep of this commission great – displayed in the four “alls.
They show us why this Commission is So Great!

- **The Greatest Authority** - Jesus has “all” authority
- **The Greatest Mission Field** - Go Make disciples of “all nations”
- **The Greatest Curriculum** – Teach “all” that He has commanded
- **The Greatest Assurance** – He is with us – for “all” our days.

Here is a mission worth giving your life to!

A. All Authority (Greatest authority)

- Jesus is claiming something that only God can claim.
- It anticipates his ascension and his enthronement.
- The universe is in subjection to Him.
- This is the **basis for the Commission.**
- **The GC would be totally outrageous if it weren’t for these two bookends!**
- Jesus is saying: “**You aren’t idiots when you do this!**”
- “**I am commissioning you! You are my Ambassadors! I am the King**”

B. All Nations (The greatest mission field)

Not all the *political states* of the world, but all the ethnic and language groupings of the peoples. “Going”

C. All that I have Commanded (greatest curriculum)

One of the things we want them to obey is this very text!

The Nations need teachers and churches.

“**All that I have commanded you**”

- The church is a family of learners.
- We are a family of disciple makers.

D. All Our Days (Greatest Comfort (28:20b))

The King loves us.

- This commission ends not with the command, but with *a comfort*.
- “In his presence is fullness of joy...” (Ps 16)
- We have his personal presence and his perpetual presence (always)

Church Discipline – I am with you when you gather! (Matt 18:20)

Church’s Mission – I am with you as you go! (Matt 28:20)

- Immanuel! ... will be with us every step of the way.

Matthew!

Before you think you’re unfit for this assignment – that this is not for you - just pause for a minute and consider who preserved the Great Commission for us!

- A hated, despised, crooked, Tax Collector.
- Like a mafia member.
- Jesus transformed him.
- He said in Matthew 9:9, “Follow Me.” And he did!
- Jesus can transform you.
- When people were upset that Jesus was hanging with him, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... I came not to call the (self) righteous, but sinners.” (9:12)
- People like us.
- Jesus makes sinners his disciples; who go and make more disciples.

Jesus made Matthew a disciple-maker, and He can make you one also.

The Resurrected Lord changes people.

He can change you too.

All of those things your heart longs for his found in Jesus Christ.

Screwtape admits, “The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact, the resurrection, & a single theological doctrine, redemption.”

It’s true.

And one it sinks into our hearts, we bow down with the rest of the redeemed and worship him.

She’s right. Tolkien is right.

The story of the gospel gives us everything our hearts have ever longed for.

Matthew wants us to know this story is true and that there’s grace for you.

You can know this Savior.

You can become his disciple by faith in him.

You can have living hope, a hope that fills your life now with meaning and joy, and gives you the hope of glory to come.