

The Garden and the Tomb: The Power of Christ's Resurrection

Matthew 28:1–10 | Pastor Douglas Humphrey | Bridge Fellowship Church

There is something uniquely painful about going back to a place expecting someone to be there — and they're not.

Maybe it's the house you grew up in. After a parent died. You pull into the driveway. You walk through the door. Everything looks and smells the same — except the person who made it home for you is gone.

There is a unique kind of grief that belongs to that moment. The going back. The remembering. The expecting. The emptiness. The silence.

That is exactly where we find the two Marys in Matthew 28. They are heading to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices. They weren't coming to celebrate Him. You don't bring embalming spices to a resurrection. They were coming to grieve, prepare His body, and say their final goodbyes.

This sermon is for everyone who came in like these two women. Sad. Confused. Unsure. Lacking encouragement.

Maybe you used to believe in Jesus — and something happened. A church leader let you down. A church member hurt you. Maybe you were taught false doctrine. Or maybe God didn't answer your prayers the way you needed Him to. And you've been carrying spices ever since.

Maybe you haven't been in a room like this for quite some time. Not because you stopped believing in God. But because believing seemed to cost you more than it seemed to give.

Or maybe you used to attend BFC — and life got loud, Sundays got complicated, and somewhere between the calendar and exhaustion, you drifted.

Wherever you came from — this has something for you.

Because Jesus walked out of that tomb, the promise God made in the ruins of Eden has been kept. And every claim sin, death, and Satan had over your life has been crushed.

From Matthew 28, here are four things the resurrection of Jesus Christ means for your life today.

1. No Matter What It Looks Like — God Is Always at Work on Your Behalf

Matthew 28:1–4

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men.

Pay attention to the timing. After the Sabbath. As the first day of the week was dawning.

The women didn't arrive to a resurrection in progress. They arrived after God had already moved. The earthquake had already happened. The angel had already descended. The stone was already rolled back. The guards were already on the ground. By the time they got there — it was done.

At no point does God ask for human assistance. At no point does He wait for someone to show up before He acts. He never does.

The day between the crucifixion and the resurrection was Saturday. The disciples were scattered. Peter was somewhere drowning in shame. The women were preparing spices. The religious leaders had posted a guard and sealed the tomb — afraid the disciples would steal Jesus' body and use it to promote a resurrection story.

Everybody who loved Jesus spent Saturday grieving a God they thought had failed them. Even at this point, His disciples did not fully understand what He meant about being raised in three days. They went to sleep Saturday night full of grief, feeling abandoned, believing it was over.

But here is what you cannot miss.

God didn't wait for their faith to recover before He moved. He was already preparing Sunday while they grieved and doubted through Saturday.

Most of life is lived on Saturday. Not the crisis — and not the celebration. The in-between. The silence. The season where God appears absent and the tomb appears sealed.

What the text shows us is this — God's activity is never contingent on our awareness of it. Just as He was at work in that tomb while the disciples grieved, He works through our Saturdays to bring us to our Sundays.

If you are in a Saturday season right now — if you feel hopeless and lost, if you are carrying spices and grieving something — God has not gone quiet. He is already preparing your Sunday.

Sheila and I know what it is to live through a long Saturday. We had just stepped into what felt like a dream season — my first full-time ministry assignment, a newborn daughter named Abigail. Everything was finally coming together. Then, less than thirty days in, everything turned. Abigail got gravely ill — not a cold, not a fever you monitor at home. She was hospitalized with spinal meningitis.

All the joy got swallowed by fear. All the celebration got interrupted by tears, questions, and the suffocating silence of not knowing what God was doing. I remember thinking — more than once — *God, why would You give us this beautiful baby girl only to take her away?*

That was our Saturday. I would never choose to live through it again. But I can tell you — our Sunday was sweeter because of it. When God brought us through, it changed us. It deepened our faith. It gave us a testimony we did not have before. Even while she was sick — God was working.

Not when you figure it out. Not when your faith gets strong enough. Not when you show up with the right attitude. Right now. In the middle of the silence. In the middle of the waiting. In the middle of what looks like nothing is happening — He is already moving.

The question isn't whether God will come through. The question is — will you trust and magnify Him all the more when He does?

God is steadily at work on your behalf even when you cannot see or feel it.

2. God Keeps Every Promise He Makes

Matthew 28:5–6 | Genesis 3:15 | Galatians 4:4–5

The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."

Four words carry the weight of this entire narrative.

Just as He said.

To understand the full force of those four words, you have to go back. Way back. Further back than the upper room. Further back than Bethlehem. All the way back to a garden — and a moment of catastrophic failure when Adam and Eve sinned.

In Genesis 3:15 — right in the middle of judgment — God turns to the serpent and makes a promise:

"I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

Someone is coming. Born of woman. He will wound you — but you will not defeat Him. You will strike His heel — but He will crush your head.

That promise has two distinct fulfillments.

Galatians 4:4 — *"When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman."* That is the first fulfillment. The incarnation. God in the flesh. Jesus came and dwelt among us.

Matthew 28:6 — *"He has risen, just as He said."* That is the second fulfillment. The resurrection. He won.

The birth was God keeping the first half of His promise. The empty tomb is God keeping the second half. Every generation between Eden and Bethlehem was living in the in-between — they had the promise, not the fulfillment. So they watched. They waited. They hoped.

Then Jesus came. He performed miracles, taught the Word, presented Himself as the promised Messiah, and showed His disciples what it looked like to walk with God in a fallen world. They had a front-row seat to all of it. And they still didn't fully believe until they saw Him risen.

That's what makes the resurrection so staggering. It didn't just prove Jesus was who He said He was — it finally broke through to the very people who had every reason to believe. The empty tomb didn't confirm their faith. It solidified it.

For us it does the same work. You are not being asked to trust something fragile. You are being asked to trust the God who kept the promise He made in the garden — across thousands of years, through generations who waited and never saw it, through disciples who doubted, through a crucifixion that looked like the end of everything. And on the other side of all of that — four words. *Just as He said.*

If that was enough to sustain generations who never saw the fulfillment — if that was enough to finally convince the ones who almost missed it — it is more than enough for us.

Whatever God has spoken over your life. Whatever He has promised in His Word. Whatever He has placed in your spirit that you are still waiting on — **He has not forgotten it. He has not changed His mind. He kept Genesis 3:15. And He will keep what He said to you.**

Before you begin declaring things over your life, though — stop and ask yourself an honest question. Is what you are waiting on actually something God has promised — or is it something you want God to promise? There is a difference between a Holy Spirit-led conviction rooted in God's Word and a personal preference dressed up in the language of faith. Before you stand on it, make sure you are standing on solid ground.

Here is how you know what God actually said:

It is grounded in God's Word. Not a feeling. Not an impression. Scripture has something specific to say about it.

It is consistent with God's primary will — which is for you to glorify Him with your whole life. If what you're waiting on is ultimately about you — it is time to think again.

It has been affirmed by Christians who know you best. Not people who tell you what you want to hear. People who love you enough to tell you the truth.

It is a persistent and growing desire. Not a passing want. Something that has stayed with you, deepened over time, and won't let you go.

If it clears all four — stand on it. Trust God to bring it to pass. That's what conviction looks like. And the empty tomb gives you everything you need to stand on what God actually said.

Just as He said.

3. The Power Sin, Death, and Satan Once Had Over You — Is No More

Matthew 28:5–7 | Colossians 2:14–15 | 1 Corinthians 15:54–57

The angel makes three declarations in verses 5 through 7: Do not be afraid. He has been resurrected. Go and tell. Three declarations — but they all rest on one reality.

The resurrection fulfills Genesis 3:15 — the crushing of the serpent's head. Here is exactly what that crushing accomplished.

Colossians 2:14–15 — "He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him."

The cross is where the act was accomplished. The sin debt paid. The legal claim canceled. Satan publicly disarmed.

1 Corinthians 15:54–57 — "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The resurrection is where the victory was declared. And that declaration means two things.

First — **God's wrath for our sin was fully satisfied.** The empty tomb is the Father's receipt — proof that the payment was accepted and the debt was cleared.

Second — **death has lost its final claim on those who belong to Christ.** When your mortal life is over, you keep right on living with God. Physical death and spiritual death — both defeated. Both swallowed up in victory.

You cannot separate the cross and the resurrection. The cross without the resurrection is an unverified claim. The resurrection without the cross is a pointless battle. Together — they fulfill what God promised in Genesis 3:15. Jesus' heel was struck at Calvary. Satan's head was crushed at the empty tomb.

Roman crucifixion was not just execution — it was a public deterrent. Do what this man did and his fate will be yours. By crucifying Jesus, both the Jewish leaders and the Roman government were sending one message: *This movement is over. Jesus of Nazareth is dead. Go home.* And it worked — initially. The disciples scattered because the man they gave their lives to seemed to take everything with Him when He died.

But three days later the tomb was empty. And that empty tomb was a divine verdict that every power in heaven and on earth had to reckon with. He is the Son of God. The only means of salvation for every person who has ever lived. And the church — the body of Christ — cannot be killed, cannot be silenced, and will never be defeated.

Rome tried to bury Jesus. The Pharisees tried to seal His truth. Death tried to hold Him. But on resurrection Sunday morning — all three of them lost. The very thing designed to silence the Gospel became proof that the Gospel cannot be stopped.

And what was true then is true for you right now. Sin has no power over you. Death has no claim on you. Satan has no authority over you. Not because of anything you have done — but because of what Jesus did on that cross and proved at His empty tomb.

Here is the problem, though. A lot of Christians understand this doctrinally — but they live like it isn't true. Still trapped in the same sin they've been fighting for years. Still carrying shame Jesus already covered. Still walking in fear the empty tomb already answered. Still giving the enemy access the cross already revoked.

This is not an unbelief problem. It is a living problem.

There are people who have been saved for years — and the enemy is still influencing their lives. Not because he has power over them. But because they keep giving it back to him. Every time you go back to that sin — you hand Satan power Jesus already took away. Every time you call that person over for a hookup — you hand Satan power Jesus already took away. Every time you stay in that toxic situation because you're too afraid to trust God with your future — you cower before a powerless enemy. Every time you reach for a bottle, a pill, a vape, a substance to manage what only God can carry — you hand Satan power Jesus already took away.

The resurrection is not a historical event you celebrate once a year. It is the daily reality you are supposed to be living from.

Jesus didn't go through all that He did to make you alive so that you could go on living like a dead person under Satan's control. This is not condemnation. This is an invitation — to stop living beneath the life Jesus purchased for you. To trust Jesus exclusively. To walk out of this differently than you walked in.

Make the decision today to live like the tomb is actually empty.

Because it is.

4. Jesus Made You Alive — and Born-Again People Tell Others About Him

Matthew 28:7–10

Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there." Listen, I have told you." So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples. Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and they will see me there."

Notice what the angel does not say. He does not say — sit here and let this sink in. He does not say — take all the time you need. He says — *go quickly and tell*. And when Jesus meets them on the road, He doesn't debrief them. He doesn't let them catch their breath. He says — *go and tell my brothers*.

They are sent before they have processed what they have seen. Commissioned in the middle of their trembling. The text says they left with fear and great joy — both at the same time. This is not the portrait of people who have it together. This is the portrait of people who have been completely overwhelmed by what they encountered — and they cannot help but obey Jesus.

The resurrection is not only an event to behold. It is an event that produces momentum. And that momentum started immediately — in two women who had no idea what they were stepping into.

God chose women who came to finish a burial to be the first to announce the resurrection. Not the twelve. Not the religious leaders. Not the people anyone would have chosen to be the first witnesses. Grieving women with spice jars.

That tells you everything you need to know about who God uses. He does not wait for the qualified. He does not wait for the composed. He does not wait for the ones who have already figured it out. He uses whoever is willing — wherever He finds them.

These women did not go home and think about it. They did not schedule a time to process it. They did not wait until they had the right words. They ran. Because that is what happens when you have a genuine encounter with the risen Christ. You cannot keep it to yourself. The news is too big. The change is too real. The tomb is too empty.

Transformed people cannot stay silent.

If Jesus has genuinely changed your life — if the resurrection is real to you — if you have been made alive in Christ — you will have something to say. And you won't be able to keep from saying it.

With equal measures of truth and grace, this also must be said. If you have been a Christian for years and you have nothing to tell anybody — if no one in your life knows what God has done for you — if the resurrection has never compelled you toward a single person — it may not be a witnessing problem. That may be an indicator that you have never fully left the tomb yourself.

Because the tomb was never meant to be a destination. It was meant to be a launching pad. The women didn't camp out and marvel at it. They saw it. They believed it. And they ran. Because the tomb being empty meant Jesus was alive — and if Jesus was alive, everybody needed to know.

That is the heartbeat of every born-again believer. Not — *I should probably tell somebody about Jesus*. But — *I cannot help but tell people about Jesus*. Not out of obligation. Under compulsion. Because you have been made alive in Christ — and you want others to experience the same.

Run. Tell people about Jesus. And trust God with the results.

Conclusion

Those women came to that tomb the same way a lot of us come into this — with spices, with grief, with no category for what they were about to find. And what they found changed everything. Not just for them. But for every person who has heard this story since. Including every person reading this today.

The tomb is empty.

That means God is still working on your Saturday. That means every promise He made is still good. That means sin and death and Satan do not get the final word over your life. That means you have been made alive — and alive people cannot stay silent.

Whatever you carried in here today — you don't have to leave with it.

If you have never given your life to Jesus — today is your day. It means turning from your sin and trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Not a prayer formula. Not a feeling. A decision to surrender your life to Him. A moment where you say — *I cannot save myself. Jesus did what I could not do. I want You to be my God.* If that is you — do not leave without talking to someone on our team. We want to pray with you and take the next step with you.

If you have been away — today is your way back. Not to a church. But to Jesus. He has been working while you were gone. You are welcome here.

If you are in Christ — today is your reminder. Go tell somebody. Do your part to make more disciples of Jesus.

Because Jesus walked out of that tomb, the promise God made in the ruins of Eden has been kept — and every claim sin, death, and Satan had over your life has been forever broken.

Run tell that.

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