

# Ministry of Grace Church

## Matthew 28

### Preface:

Last week we talked about the physical and emotional agony that Jesus endured to pay for our sins. To Jesus' disciples it was the darkest day of their lives, quite literally. This week we will talk about the most beautiful day in history, the day with the most amazing son-rise, that is, s-o-n rise.

### The Resurrection

#### **Matthew 28:1-10**

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. (Slide 2A) <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. (Slide 2B) <sup>6</sup>He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>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." <sup>8</sup>So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

**Mark 16:1-11** – <sup>1</sup>When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup>And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. <sup>5</sup>And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." <sup>8</sup>And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. <sup>9</sup>Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. <sup>10</sup>She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. <sup>11</sup>But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

**Luke 24:1-12** – <sup>1</sup>But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, behold,

two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup>And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” <sup>8</sup>And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup>and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup>but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup>But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

**John 20:1-18** – <sup>1</sup>Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>3</sup>So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup>Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples went back to their homes. <sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup>And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup>Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup>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.’” <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

### **Notes:**

Throughout the years, there has been some continuing controversy as to the actual day of the week that Jesus was crucified. But the specific day is not nearly as important as the fact that He *was* crucified. If you look at other religions, eastern or western, you will find that nearly all of them venerate a person who is dead. The thing that makes Christianity unique is the fact that Jesus did not stay dead! We worship a living person, a living God. He's alive! He is Risen!

Since we celebrated Easter just a few weeks ago, I'm not going to belabor the two most important facts in the history of mankind, but I will mention them:

1. that God took on human form and lived a perfect life and then give up that life to pay for our sins

and

2. that Jesus didn't stay dead, proving that He is God and assuring us that we, too, will be raised from the dead.

Instead, what we want to do today is to look at the events of Resurrection Sunday to understand the sequence of things that happened that day. Since we know that Matthew did not write his gospel account in strict chronological order, and he left out a number of details, we will use information from his gospel account as well as the other gospel accounts to reconstruct that day.

Before dawn, Mary Magdalene along with Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), Salome (the mother of James and John), and Joanna ([Luke 24:10](#)) went to the tomb. They were going there to anoint the body with the spices they had bought. ([Matthew 28:1](#) & [Mark 16:1,2](#))

Before they got there, there was an earthquake and the stone was rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. When the women arrived at the tomb, they saw the stone was rolled away and went into the tomb where they were met by two angels. The Roman guards, who had passed out from fear, were not aware that the women were even there. The angels told the women to come and see where Jesus had been, ([Slide 3A](#)) then they told the women to go tell the other disciples ([Slide 3B](#)) that Jesus had been raised from the dead and that they should go into Galilee ([Matthew 28:3-7](#))

Then the women went away. Mary Magdalene went to Peter and John to tell them ([Slide 4A](#)), while the other women went to tell the rest of the disciples. After the women left the tomb, the guards revived and left to tell the Chief Priests all that had taken place. ([Matthew 28:11-15](#))

Mary Magdalene told Peter and John, “[They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.](#)” As a result, Peter and John ran to the tomb. Arriving at the tomb first, John stooped down and looked in. Then Peter arrived and went right in. They both saw the linen cloths lying there. Peter also saw the face cloth, having been rolled up and placed in a separate place. Then Peter and John went home. ([John 20:2-10](#))

Mary arrived at the tomb again and stood outside crying (apparently while Peter and John were still inside). After Peter and John left, she stooped down and looked inside where she saw two angels. They asked her why she was crying and she said, “[They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.](#)” Then she turned around and saw Jesus (not knowing that it was Him). He also asked her why she was crying and who she was looking for. She, believing Him to be the gardener, said, “[Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.](#)” Jesus said, “[Mary,](#)” and immediately she recognized Him. Jesus told her not to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. He then told her to go tell the disciples, which she did. ([John 20:11-18](#))

Meanwhile, the other women, the ones who went with Mary Magdalene to the tomb initially, were heading into town to tell the other disciples. As they were walking along, Jesus met them. They responded by coming to Him and grabbing ahold of Him. Since He did not prevent them from touching Him as He had done to Mary, He must have ascended to the Father between His encounter with Mary and this encounter. Jesus then told the women to go tell “His brothers” to go to Galilee where they would see Him. ([Matthew 28:9-10](#)) They went and told the 11 disciples plus others (Luke says “to the eleven and to all the rest”). ([Matthew 28:7-8](#)) Apparently, Mary Magdalene had

rejoined the other women by this time and she told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord” (John 20:18)

We are told that sometime later that day Jesus appeared personally to Simon, probably as an assurance that he had been forgiven for having denied Him three times. (Luke 24:33-34)

In the late afternoon, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. After Jesus revealed Himself to them while breaking bread with them, they went back to Jerusalem and all the disciples gathered together (except for Thomas). As they were talking about the events of the day, Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of them. This frightened the disciples, so Jesus showed them His wounds, but they still didn't believe because they thought He was a spirit (ghost). He then asked if they had anything to eat and he was given a piece of broiled fish, which He ate. Then, Jesus opened their minds to understand all the things that had been written about Him in the Scriptures. (Luke 24:36-49)

## **The Report of the Guards**

### **Matthew 28:11-15**

**<sup>11</sup>While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. <sup>12</sup>And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers <sup>13</sup>and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup>And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup>So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.**

### **Notes:**

After the women left the tomb, apparently the guards revived and went to tell the Chief Priests. (Slide 4B) On the surface, it seems curious that they reported these things to the Chief Priests and not to their Roman superiors. There are probably a couple of reasons for this. The first is that Pilate had assigned the soldiers to the Chief Priests and Pharisees.

Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. (Matthew 27:65-66)

The other reason they went to the Chief Priests instead of their Roman superiors lies in the fact that any Roman Soldier who allowed someone they were guarding to escape, was executed. Knowing that the Chief Priests and Pharisees wanted to hush up any talk about Jesus being raised from the dead, they probably felt safer talking to them first.

I wonder – did the soldiers think the body had been stolen, or did they know that Jesus had been raised from the dead? Did they tell the Sanhedrin about the earthquake and the angel? Or, did they simply tell them that the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty?

When the Sanhedrin had assembled, they decided on a cover story and bribed the soldiers to say that the body had been stolen while they slept. However, if anyone were to do a thorough investigation, they would have found several flaws in this concocted story.

First of all, no soldier who was assigned guard duty would ever allow himself to fall asleep. The soldiers would, in fact, work in concert with each other to make sure that didn't happen. It may

have been possible for one or even two of the guards to fall asleep on the job. But, for all of them to fall asleep at the same time is virtually impossible. However, this is mere speculation because we aren't given any of these details.

Secondly, If the soldiers were asleep (all of them), how would they know that it was the disciples who stole the body? What about evidence? When Peter and John looked into the tomb, they saw the grave cloths lying there. The Greek word translated "grave cloths" is *othnia*, a plural noun meaning "linen bandages in which dead bodies were swathed for burial." (John 20:6-7) If the disciples had come while the soldiers were unconscious, they would have been in a big hurry and would not have taken the time to unwrap the body and leave the grave cloths behind. Besides, with the grave cloths removed, the body would have been covered with the embalming spices that Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped within the grave cloths. The body would have been much harder to carry away like that.

As long as we're talking about the grave cloths, let's also talk about the "napkin" which had been on His head. The Greek word for this piece of cloth is *soudarion*. It means "a sweat-cloth." (Slide 5A) If you do a search of the Internet for this "napkin," you will find numerous articles about the fact that it was "folded up" and placed by itself. According to these stories (none of which occur before 2007), all Jewish boys know of the ancient tradition which goes something like this. When the master was finished with his meal, he would wad up the napkin and drop it on the table. If, however, he got up from the table, but was not finished and intended to come back, he would fold up the napkin and lay it on the table by itself. This would indicate to the servants that he was not finished and was coming back. According to these internet articles, the fact that the napkin was folded and lying by itself indicates that Jesus is not finished and that He is coming back.

Now, that's a beautiful story, filled with amazing symbolism, telling us that Jesus will return some day. The problem is that before 2007 there is no evidence anywhere of such a tradition among the Jews. In fact, the Jews did not use a napkin at their meals. This is a practice that originated in Europe more than 1000 years later. Also, the word that is translated "folded-up" is *entulissō*, meaning "to roll up" or "to wrap around." It is the same root word that is used in Revelation where it speaks of the sky being rolled up like a scroll.

And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Revelation 6:14)

Therefore, I think we can safely say that the "napkin" being "folded-up" by itself is not Jesus' way of saying that He is coming back. After all, He hadn't even left yet! So – why are we told about this sweat cloth being twisted up and lying by itself? Consider this, when the body was prepared for burial, the face was first covered by the sweat cloth, then the embalming spices were applied to the body and the entire body, including the head, was wrapped with strips of cloth, binding the embalming spices to the body. When Jesus rose from the dead, His body did not simply dematerialize and then rematerialize like the transporter on Star Trek. He passed right through the spices and burial cloths taking the sweat cloth with Him. He then removed the sweat cloth, rolled it up (which was a common practice), and laid it aside. This serves as another indication that the resurrection was a miraculous activity that could not be explained away.

Now, back to the disciples. Notice that they were not brave enough to come to Jesus' rescue when He was being arrested or while He was being crucified. Why would they suddenly have the

courage to commit a capital crime (grave robbing) just to perpetrate a lie that He was raised from the dead (which they didn't believe anyway).

Also, note that before the resurrection, the disciples were living in fear. After the day of Pentecost, they were boldly bearing witness of the resurrection without fear, even in the face of the threat of death. They could not have made such a dramatic change in their actions if it was all based on a lie and an act of grave robbing (which, incidentally, was punishable by death.)

And – consider the abject lack of integrity on the part of the religious leaders. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, they claimed that if Jesus were to come down from the cross, they would believe that He is the Son of God. However, once He was raised from the dead, they still refused to believe in Him, even in the face of undeniable evidence of supernatural activity.

## **The Great Commission**

### **Matthew 28:16-20**

**<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

**Mark 16:14-18** – <sup>14</sup>Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. <sup>15</sup>And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. <sup>16</sup>Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup>And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; <sup>18</sup>they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.” <sup>19</sup>So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>20</sup>And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

### **Notes:**

In verse 10 of this chapter, the angel told the women to relay to the “brothers” that they are to go to Galilee where Jesus will be with them. Most of Jesus’ ministry was in Galilee and most of the disciples were from that region. It was reasonable, therefore, for Him to tell them to go back to familiar territory.

When Jesus met them there, He gave them two messages. The first was that He had been given all authority, both in heaven and on earth. If you compare this to what Satan offered Him in the wilderness, we see that He got much more than an earthly reign. The Greek word translated “authority” is *exousia*, which refers to, “permission, power, authority, and the legal right to do something.” So, we see that because of His willingness to submit to His Father’s will, Jesus was given the right, the authority, and the power to rule all of heaven and earth.

The second message that Jesus had for His disciples was what we refer to as “The Great Commission.” These are the marching orders for all Christians. What appears to be a series of commands here is actually only one. The command is “Make Disciples.” (Slide 6A) A literal translation of verse 19 would be:

Having gone, then, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

Wherever we are, we are supposed to be helping others to be disciples of Jesus. A disciple is someone who is learning a discipline, and doing so by observing the Master and doing what He says to do. Some would say, and I agree, that Mark 16:15 is also part of the Great Commission. It says:

Having gone into all the world, preach the gospel to all the creation. (Mark 16:15)

There is also only one command in this verse. It is “preach the gospel.” So, if we combine these two, we have “wherever you are, preach the gospel and make disciples.” (Slide 6B)

## **So What?**

The angelic message given to the women at the tomb was two-fold: “Come and see” and “Go and tell.” Anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior as done the first part of what the angels told the women at the tomb to do. They have come to the truth that Jesus has risen from the dead. But, what about the second part? How many of us are “going and telling”?

Notice that the great commission is not, “Support your pastor and missionaries so they can preach the gospel and make disciples.” That’s your job description just as much as it is mine. We are all commanded to preach the good news and we are all commanded to make disciples.

## **Now What?**

We have just spent the last eight months looking at the life of Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. We have done so through the eyes of Matthew, the former tax collector with some assistance from the other three gospel writers. Hopefully, we all have a better understand of the life He lived and the life He gave.

In the final analysis, however, it all boils down to what He expects from each and every one of us. The trouble is that none of us can do what He commands us to do under our own power. We are broken vessels, incapable of holding water without the power of His Holy Spirit. We may have the best of intentions, fueled by a strong desire to please Him. But we still can’t do it under our own power.

So, what do we need in order to fulfill the commission given to us? We need prayer. We need lots of prayer! (Slide 7A) Without the blessing and power of the Holy Spirit we can accomplish nothing for God. Several weeks ago, I challenged each one of us to set aside a specific time each and every day for prayer. Have you done that? Now, I certainly can’t condemn any of you who have not yet done that. I was a Christian for almost 50 years before I did it. Even then it was only because of a loving wife who came just short of insisting that we do so together. It’s hard to do if you aren’t already in the habit. It takes determination and fortitude. So – just because you

haven't yet done it, doesn't mean you can forget about it. It's a necessary part of a fulfilling walk with God. Set aside a specific time each and every day that you sit down and pray.

As a church, we are facing some significant challenges right now, which I will explain in a few minutes. Keep in mind, however, that a church without prayer is a church without power. Right now, we need to follow God's leading, but we can't know what that is without lots of prayer. I greatly appreciate those of you who meet with us to pray every Sunday morning before our service. I know, it means getting up ½ hour earlier on Sunday morning. But, isn't it worth it? Isn't He worth it? We need to get to work if we are going to fulfill our commission.

**Let's pray.**

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