

Text: Matthew 28:1-10

Title: “Moved by the Resurrection of Jesus”

BUMPER VIDEO - Open your Bible to Matthew 28. You’re welcome to use in the seat back in front of you. For the last several weeks we’ve been walking with Jesus in the days leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection ... “The Week that Changed the World.” And the Good News is that it’s the week that can change *your* world. Let’s see what the Bible says about the first Easter.

Matthew 28:1 - After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

Now Matthew is one of four biblical “reporters” who along with Mark, Luke and John give us important facts about the life of Jesus, including His death and resurrection. Each Gospel writer has pulled together facts with a purpose in mind. And Matthew wants us to see how the resurrection of Jesus *moved* the disciples, particularly two women, both named Mary.

ILLUSTRATION – What if I asked you to describe a particularly moving experience you’ve had? Maybe it would be the birth of a child, a patriotic ceremony, a Broadway show or, on a more spiritual note, the baptism of a loved one or a glorious worship experience. You get chills or goosebumps or a warm feeling. You may get choked up, feel a lump in your throat or have tears well up in your eyes. Maybe it takes your breath away. You were moved!

My prayer for you today is that you will be genuinely moved, not by my words or by the music, but by the reality that Jesus Christ is alive. He was crucified and buried on that Friday of the week that changed the world. His body was in the grave on Saturday and sometime in the wee hours of that Sunday morning, the third day, Jesus rose again. There was an explosion of power inside that tomb. The glorious power of God flooded that tomb and the dead body of Jesus came back to life. He arose with a supernatural body that was freed from all the limitations and weaknesses of a natural human body ... resurrection.

And as these women walked to the tomb of Jesus they had no idea this had happened. It says they simply went to look at the tomb. Remember, Joseph and Nicodemus took Jesus’ body down off of the cross, wrapped it in burial cloths and placed it inside the tomb that belonged to Joseph. So now the women show up to further anoint the body with special burial spices and perfumes. And they are going

to be surprised. The resurrection of Jesus Christ will turn out to be a moving experience for them. First, we know the women are moved initially by...

1. HOPELESSNESS

They had no idea they were about to encounter the most amazing event in history, the resurrection of Christ. In spite of the fact that Jesus had repeatedly told them that He would be crucified, then on the third day raised from the dead, it never seemed to soak in. And that Sunday morning as they went to the tomb of Jesus they were hopeless. As far as they knew He was dead.

ILLUSTRATION – It must have been like the thousands of people who gathered last week to watch in horror and disbelief at the burning of one of the greatest landmarks in the world ... the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. There was nothing they could do but watch it happen. I think of so many people are looking at their lives like people looking at that burning cathedral and thinking there's no hope ... nothing they can do to change their situation. But the women walk up on a most amazing scene.

Matthew 28:2 - There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

Sometime prior to their arrival an angel was dispatched from heaven to orchestrate the details of the resurrection. The angels of heaven are all over this, just like they were at the birth of Jesus. With the angel's arrival there was a violent earthquake as this angel came down and moved the stone away from the opening of the tomb. Then he sat on it. I love that. The women need to know that God has intervened in their hopelessness.

It says in v.3 that the angel's appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. He glowed with the glory of heaven. And it must have been a stunning sight because ...

Matthew 28:4 - The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The guards are also moved. They were some of the most elite Roman soldiers, but they were staring a more powerful warrior than they had ever faced. They "shook" like the ground shook at the earthquake when the angel came down. They're traumatized because the empty tomb and the missing body of Jesus meant they

could well be punished by death. But the soldiers are not the only ones who are afraid. The two women were moved not just by hopelessness, but also moved by...

2. **FEAR**

Matthew 28:5 - The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

They're afraid and you would be too if you were suddenly in the presence of an brilliant angel. On top of that they were staring at an empty tomb and they don't understand how that could have happened. They were like the other disciples ... weak in their faith and because they didn't yet see that God was in this, they were afraid. But the angel said, “Don't be afraid.”

I love the way the angel spoke to the women, even in their disbelief: “*I know* you are looking for the body of your Lord who was crucified two days ago. *I know* what you're thinking. *I know* your doubts and confusion and fears. *I know*. I understand.” And the Lord speaks tenderly to us in our fear to say, “I know. I understand.” What a compassionate Father we have!

Isaiah 41:10 - So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Notice that this is a command ... “Do not be afraid.” God doesn't command us to do something that isn't possible. So, it's not the absence of the emotion of fear; it's the refusal to let fear paralyze us like it did the soldiers after the resurrection when it says they become like dead men. And the reason we don't have to fear is explained in ...

Matthew 28:6 - He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

God is at work in ways they couldn't comprehend. Jesus is not in the tomb because He has risen, just as He said He would. Remember that Jesus prophesied He would be crucified and that He would be raised from the dead after three days ... and it happened. And the fact that it happened testifies to the reality that Jesus is God. The angel said, “Come and see.”

ILLUSTRATION – You may have heard the testimony of Lee Stroebel, a brilliant journalist and lawyer ... and atheist. He thought the idea of an all-loving, all-powerful creator of the universe was ridiculous. One day Lee's wife came home and told him that she had become a follower of Jesus. Lee thought it was the end of their marriage. But when he saw the positive changes in her he decided to let it play out. One day he went to church with his wife and heard the message that forgiveness is a free gift and that Christ died for our sins so that we might spend eternity with Him. But Lee said, "Even as an atheist, I understood one thing about Christianity: it rises or falls on the resurrection of Jesus." So Lee put his journalistic skills to work to investigate the resurrection, and he was astonished to discover that there is very credible, historical evidence that the resurrection of Christ actually happened. He writes, "I realized that, in light of the torrent of evidence flowing in the direction of the truth of Christianity, it would require more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to become a Christian. And so on that day, I received Jesus Christ as my forgiver, and as my leader." Jesus said...

John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

Now news like this must not be kept a secret. The angel said:

Matthew 28:7 - 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."

This is great news and others need to hear about it. So these women were the first witnesses *of* the resurrection and the first witnesses *about* the resurrection. Why? They were there. They showed up. How much have you missed simply because you didn't show up ... didn't show up to pray or read your Bible ... didn't show up for church ... didn't show up to serve. These women were the first witnesses because they showed up.

Matthew 28:8 - So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

So they were moved by hopelessness that led to fear, but then they were moved by ...

3. JOY

Matthew 28:8 - So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

They were afraid yet filled with joy ... mega-joy! Most of the time when we have to step on faith and obey the Lord there is a mixture of fear and joy ... fear at not knowing the outcome ... joy at knowing we're following Christ into whatever the future holds. Joy is the unique possession of people who know Christ. Do you have joy in life? Jesus promised in John 15:11, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full."

Remember the angel commanded them in v.7 to "go quickly and tell..." And so v.8 says they "hurried away" and "ran to tell." When the Lord tells us to do something we should sprint to obey Him. Joy fuels that kind of immediate obedience. The *emotion* of joy created *motion* in their feet. And when you're running to obey, don't be surprised to run into Jesus.

Matthew 28:9a - Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said.

Now this is fascinating. The first word Jesus spoke to His followers after His resurrection was, "Greetings." Actually it wouldn't have sounded that formal, because that little word was just the common way people greeted one another along the way. "How's it going? What's up?" The disciples must have said, "What's up? You are! You're alive!" And it says they came to him, and clasped his feet and worshiped Him. So we see their hopelessness gives way to fear which gives way to joy, and now they are moved by ...

4. WORSHIP

It says in v.9 that when Jesus moved toward them they moved toward Jesus. They held on to His feet and worshiped Him. Worship is a verb; it should move us. They bowed down and worshiped in reverence. They knew without a doubt that Jesus, the divine Son of Almighty God, was alive. And the natural response is to fall at His feet. By the way, that is the eternal destiny of Jesus:

Philippians 2:10-11 - At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now Jesus continues...

Matthew 28:10 - “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

So we see they also are moved by ...

5. MEANING

This event gave meaning to their lives. This is what the Bible calls hope. So what moves us from being *hopeless* to being *hopeful* is the realization that Jesus is alive. And if He has conquered death this changes everything.

Jesus repeats the command of the angel, “Do not be afraid.” Then He gives them their mission ... go and tell. Earlier the angel told the women, “Come and see.” Now it’s go and tell.

Now why did Jesus meet them in Galilee? Why not Jerusalem? Unlike Jerusalem, Galilee was a multi-ethnic region. There were Jews in Galilee, but, unlike Jerusalem, there were also many Gentiles ... people far from God. Later in Matthew 28 you’ll see Jesus gathering His disciples, preparing them for their mission. The resurrection of Christ caused them to be moved to meaning, to a true purpose in life and that is to take the Gospel to the nations. So Jesus said, “Go and tell the nations. News this great is too good to be kept a secret.”

ILLUSTRATION –Next week the new “Avengers” movie is coming out, supposedly the last one. (That’s what they always say.) Apparently, the ending of this movie is so stunning that the directors have done something unprecedented. They are asking movie goers not to tell others how they story ends. Don’t spoil it. Come and see, but don’t go and tell. But the resurrection of Jesus is news too good to be kept a secret.

But before you go and tell, you need to first come and see. The power of the resurrection is life-changing, life-moving power. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that changes lives today through faith in Christ. And today if you feel moved by this, it’s the Spirit of the living Lord Jesus Christ drawing you to Himself. Let that emotion create motion toward God. I’m talking about being moved to the very core of your being ... moving you from one way of life to another ... from one eternal destiny to another.