

Raised With Christ 7-9-06

Matthew 28:1-10 (NIV)

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. 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. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 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." ⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Do you realize that our passage for today was the first Sunday morning worship service? (1Corinthians 16:2) Consider the similarities of this first Sunday morning service and our own. Notice that there are more women than men. They seem to be more willing to worship. God help us men. We don't need to be like the disciples, behind locked doors, waiting for the women to come tell us what we should have been there to hear.

Commented [notes1]: 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.
1 Cor 16:2 (NIV)

Notice also that angels are present. In the letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul tells us that angels look on during our worship services. (1Corinthians 11:10) But in the fundamental meaning of the word "angel" is a messenger. In the same way then, we come to hear a messenger proclaim the word of the Lord. (Acts 20:20)

Commented [notes2]: 10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.
1 Cor 11:10 (NIV)

Unbelievers are afraid to attend, like these shaking guards. They are afraid they will yield their will to the Lord and no longer be in control of their life. They may be present, but they do not allow the message into their hearts. (Luke 8:12) And sometimes when I look out on the congregation, there are those who look like dead men. Don't be one of them. Those women that came to serve Jesus heard the message of a resurrected Savior and were given directions. In the same way, the Spirit of God speaks to us of the power of resurrected life and sends us out with a mission. We go with the same mixed feelings of fear and joy. (Acts 5:41)

Commented [notes3]: 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.
Acts 20:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.
Luke 8:12 (NIV)

It is in the obedient going that we see Jesus. He often shows up when we least expect it. (Romans 11:33) He meets us in amazing circumstances that we cannot deny came from His hand. Let me give you a fresh illustration. My son-in-law and daughter just had a baby. They have to move because the subdivision where they live does not allow children. My son-in-law's brother came to help them move but before he arrived they found out their new home completion date was moved back a month. At first glance it seemed like such a waste, like unwelcome news. But while Andrew was going to the airport to pick up his brother, a potential buyer made

Commented [notes5]: 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.
Acts 5:41 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!
Romans 11:33 (NIV)

an offer. What closing date did the buyer suggest? They coincidentally wanted to close on Andrew and Katrina's new move-in date. That would result in avoiding the difficulty of paying two mortgages. And suddenly we see Jesus, answering prayer in a way we didn't understand, but in a way that was perfect for these new parents who needed to get use to taking care of a baby before they attempted a move. Suddenly, what we thought was bad news, we now see as God's gracious hand orchestrating things in a way we didn't imagine. We see God taking care of all the details, and we worship.

Sometimes we meet Him in the Word as it comes alive while we read and He gives us the direction we need. We meet Him in brothers and sisters that speak a word of encouragement from the Spirit of God. (1Corinthians 14:3-4) We cling to that moment of recognition of His presence and we worship. There in that moment of worship He often confirms the direction we heard earlier from the messenger. He quiets our fears with His reassurance. He calls us to encourage others to go and promises that in the going, they too will see Him. Do you see that pattern in our passage for today? How many millions of times has that pattern been played out?

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. The Sabbath now over, the women could make the journey to the tomb in keeping with the Law. We learn from the other gospel writers that they were bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus. (Mark 16:1) Nicodemus had already placed about 75lbs, (John 19:39) but these ladies, and others who were with them, wanted to do their part, to show their love. The spices covered the smell of decomposition, allowing them to visit the body for a longer period of time. Bringing the spices was their declaration of that intention. They had seen the rock shut the tomb and were probably all planning to work together to roll it out of the way. They would not have been present when the Roman guards came and placed a seal on the rock that closed the entrance to the tomb. That would have happened after the Sabbath had begun.

The disciples were cowering behind a locked door, worried that they would be the next to be crucified. They didn't want to risk being recognized in public as a Jesus' follower. (John 20:19) It was too risky. Why didn't they remember Jesus' promise that He would rise in three days? (Mark 8:31) Didn't they believe Him? Or did they think it was a symbolic promise? They had seen Lazarus rise from the dead, but Jesus was present to perform that miraculous act. Now His battered lifeless body lay in a tomb.

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. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. Again, we have an abbreviated version in Matthew. He has a short list of women (Mark 16:1) and only mentions one of the angels (Luke 24:4), the one that rolled the stone back spoke with the women. It all began with a violent earthquake. We would call it an aftershock from the one that took place when Jesus died. (Matthew 27:51) They come from the presence of the Lord, and so like Moses coming from the Lord's presence, this angel was radiant. It almost sounds like the description of Jesus on the Mount of

Commented [notes7]: 3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.
4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.
1 Cor 14:3-4 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.
Mark 16:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.
John 19:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"
John 20:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.
Mark 8:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.
Mark 16:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.
Luke 24:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.
Matt 27:51 (NIV)

Transfiguration. (Luke 9:29) The appearance of these incredible beings always causes man to be overwhelmed with fear.

⁴ *The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.* These men probably took part in the mockery of Christ in the Praetorium. This squad of four soldiers was trained to each hold a square meter of ground from whatever forces attacked them. They are battle-hardened men who have looked death in the face and fought their way through. But now, in the presence of this awe-inspiring creature that they have never seen the likes of before, they are shaking in their sandals. They tremble for a moment and then pass out. Most of us have never felt fear to that extent. If you ever see an angel you will.

There is an authentic ring to this narration that has to confront doubters. If the disciples made this up they would have placed themselves there that morning, not the women. They would have been coming to greet Jesus as He fulfilled His promise of raising Himself to life, not cowering behind locked doors. If I were making it up, I'd have the soldiers fall in conversion as they see Jesus flying like Superman out of the tomb. Or if I wanted to write an angel into the script, I'd have the Romans attack the angel and the angel would in one sweeping kung fu move disarm them all which would send them running. But the gospel writers don't flinch from their failures. They write what happened, and the way it happened is consistent with other Biblical stories of the appearance of angels. Man's reaction is consistent with human nature. We recognize our own weaknesses in them and realize we would probably have acted the same way. Even in the Revelation, written years after Matthew's account, when John the Beloved saw these magnificent creatures we call angels, he wanted to bow in worship, but they refuse to let him do so. (Revelation 22:8-9)

⁵ *The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.* Here is that mandatory angelic greeting to God's servants, *"Do not be afraid."* They have to say it just to calm down the recipients of the message long enough to hear the message. The angel first tells them that he understands their heart to see the crucified Jesus. He is not there to confront them, like he did with the soldiers, but to assist them. If an angel showed up in your life today, what would he be doing, assisting you, or confronting you? If you are born again, the Scriptures declare that they are here to assist us. (Hebrews 1:14)

On the door of the tomb at Gordon's Calvary in Jerusalem are the angel's words, *"He is not here; he is risen!"* They are unique words. There are no other graves anywhere in the world that can post those words. None of the prophets and sages and founders of the religions of the world can post those words over their tombs. Their bodies decayed and their bones turned to dust, but Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ, is risen from the dead. Death could not hold Him. (Psalm 16:10)

The angel added the words, *"just as he said."* It was a gentle rebuke to them for not believing that what Jesus says will come to pass. This angel was probably there when, as the instrument of creation, the Word created all things. He knew it was not

Commented [notes15]: 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Luke 9:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9 But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" Rev 22:8-9 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Heb 1:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. Psalms 16:10 (NIV)

possible for Jesus to say something that would not come to pass in detail. (Isaiah 55:11) We are often reminded when, to our surprise, we see the Lord rescue us or turn a situation for our good that it is "just as he said." How many times have you looked back on a situation and thought, "Yep, it is just as He said"? Why did I doubt? Then the angel invited them to take a look into the tomb. When your faith isn't strong enough to believe, the Lord will often send you to look at some irrefutable evidence. How patient He is with our weaknesses. (Psalm 103:14)

Commented [notes19]: 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11 (NIV)

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." Go encourage those moping, fearful disciples that things are not the way they think they are. It usually isn't as bad as we think. In fact, like the story I told you earlier, what appears to be bad is really a blessing in the process. What makes the blessing so wonderful is that it is often better than we could have imagined or hoped for. It certainly was in this case. They thought their future King was killed, dead, finished. When in fact, He was on His way to conquering death and hell and returning to put them in charge of delivering the message to the church that was about to begin. He was about to fill them with His presence in the form of the Holy Spirit. They were going to convey His life and words for generations to come. Things are rarely as bad as you think. If you are a child of God they are usually better than you can imagine!

Commented [notes20]: 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. Psalms 103:14 (NIV)

Jesus wanted to meet them in Galilee. I've always wondered why. Perhaps there were disciples there that needed to see Him resurrected. It was their place of familiarity, but now they would be seeing it in a whole new light. I think that is true of us too. Jesus comes into our world, into our office or workplace and suddenly everything takes on a different meaning. Work is an opportunity to show His character. Relationships are opportunities to convey His love. Leisure is an opportunity to worship Him. Have you met Jesus in your place of familiarity? He has gone there ahead of you. He longs to meet you there.

Matthew leaves out a few encounters with Jesus before they went to Galilee. Jesus showed up twice in the room they were holed up at. I love those stories. They are among my favorite in the Gospels. The disciples didn't believe the women when they brought the report. (Luke 24:11) Here again we see the integrity of the story to mention their faults. Jesus had to show up personally to convince them. It is as if He gave them a chance to go on faith alone, without seeing, but they did not have that much faith. (Hebrews 11:6) Then Jesus came again, because Thomas, who was not there the first time, was still doubting. (John 20:27) In one of those remarkable lines, it says that He began to explain to them that "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Luke 24:44 (NIV) He also appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus, somehow cloaking His identity. Their hearts burned within them as He opened up the Scriptures to them. (Luke 24:15-16) They suddenly recognized Him when He broke the bread.

Commented [notes21]: 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Luke 24:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb 11:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." John 20:27 (NIV)

But back to our account in Matthew, ⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Fear mixed with joy. Fear perhaps that the disciples would not believe, or fearful what would happen to them

Commented [notes24]: 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. Luke 24:15-16 (NIV)

if they began telling everyone He had risen. At the same time the fear couldn't squelch the exuberant joy that Jesus was no longer dead. The One they followed and loved so deeply had somehow risen from among the dead. When God calls us to step out by faith and go a new direction we can relate to the fear and joy. We are afraid of the unknown that awaits us, of the consequences of our decision to obey, and yet we are so joyful that God has spoken and we are called. (Psalm 2:11)

⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. As they obeyed, the Lord Himself met them. In another gospel He has to warn them not to cling to Him. (John 20:17) He will be returning to the Father, and He doesn't want them to go through the pain of separation again. They can't cling to His physical presence and receive the Spirit. They must let Him go to receive His presence in them. (John 16:7) He suddenly shows up in our lives too, as we are on the way to do what He has called us to.

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Jesus gives the "fear not" command again. If I saw someone I knew had a few days earlier been brutally murdered talking with me, he would have to tell me not to be afraid.

Jesus told them to go tell His "brothers"... Here stands the victor of sin, death and hell calling some men who had deserted Him and locked themselves behind a door in fear, "brothers"! The author of Hebrews wrote that He is not ashamed to call them brothers. (Hebrews 2:11) Why? Because He makes us holy! He made them holy! They needed to witness Him alive a number of times so that they could without question write that He had risen. Then they could let future generations know that there is hope after death. The firstfruits from among the dead, Jesus, is the guarantee that we will rise too. (1Corinthians 15:20)

In last Sunday's message, we saw that we were to die with Christ and be buried with Him. Today our emphasis is that we should go on to be raised with Him as well. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to experience the power of resurrected life. (Ephesians 1:18-20) We are to live in newness of life. (Romans 6:4) The power that raised Jesus from the dead is supposed to be active in us as we encounter the world each day. (Colossians 3:1) Do you believe that? Do you live in the light to that reality? How would your day be different if you believed the resurrected Christ is living in you? That is what our life is to be like day in and day out, *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. (Colossians 1:27) If you believed this truth that the Scriptures proclaim, how would it change your conversations with others, the way you spend your time, and your confidence when stepping out to obey the Holy Spirit? Listen to Jesus' words. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. John 14:18-20 (NIV) Has that day come in your life? Start stepping out in faith in what Jesus said. Amen?

Commented [notes25]: 11 Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Psalms 2:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" John 20:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. John 16:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. Heb 2:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1 Cor 15:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, Eph 1:18-20 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Col 3:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col 1:27 (NIV)