

Fear Not. Jesus Lives!

Matthew 27:62-28:15 - NCBC, November 21, 2021

Main Point: **Jesus lives in spite of all your fears.**

- **Fear tries to control outcomes, but Jesus lives!** (62-66)
 - Fear trusts human planning more than God's word
 - Fear trusts human power more than God's work

In spite of fear's unbelief, Jesus lives as my King!

- **Fear paralyzes your life, but Jesus lives!** (1-10)
 - Fear deadens your worship of Jesus
 - Fear deadens your witness for Jesus

In spite of fear's inactivity, Jesus lives as my King!

- **Fear buries the truth, but Jesus lives!** (11-15)
 - Fear lies and changes God's message
 - Fear lies and discredits God's messengers

In spite of fear's lies, Jesus lives as my King!

Application: **Do not be afraid. Come, Believe, Go, and Tell!**

- Joyfully believe: "come and see" that Jesus is alive!
- Joyfully obey: "go and tell" that Jesus is alive!

Opening Announcements:

- New Adult Discipleship Electives **begin next Sunday November 28th**. Sign up today to get equipped for ministry and strengthen your faith in Christ!

<<Elder Prayer>>



Thank you, Denny, for leading us in the worship of **humble dependence together**. What a privilege to celebrate Jesus' resurrection by gathering on this first day of the week and rejoicing in believers' baptisms! Now we get to open God's Word and read the account of Jesus' resurrection which has made all of today's joy possible.

So please open your Bible now to **Matthew 27 verse 62**.



If you need a Bible, simply raise your hand so we can give you one. These Bibles are our gift for you to use every day, or you can also return them to the back at the conclusion of our service.

We are quickly nearing the end of our 3-year study of Matthew's gospel. I know back in **Matthew chapter 5** when I started preaching one sermon for each of the beatitudes, some of you never thought you'd live to see the end of Matthew's gospel... but we are now just a couple of weeks away from completing this marvelous study together!

Today we focus on the resurrection of Jesus that proves Jesus is King in fulfillment of all of God's promises. Then next Sunday pastor Ritch Boerckel from Bethany Baptist Church will be in our pulpit, leaving me to complete our Matthew series by preaching the Great Commission on December 5th.

Although we've spent considerable time preaching through Matthew's gospel, I pray it has been life-giving and refreshing to behold Jesus as your King.



Now today we are called to lay down sinful fear and rejoice in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Please stand in honor of the reading of Scripture, as I read from **Matthew 27, verse 62** in the English Standard Version:

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, 'After three days I will rise.' ⁶⁴ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

28 *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. ² 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. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus*

who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ 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.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

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

This is the reading of God’s Word. Please be seated.

Let’s pray.

As we gather on this special morning to praise Jesus, I’m aware that not everyone listening right now has a heart full of gratitude. Some of us are wrestling even in this moment with sinful fear.

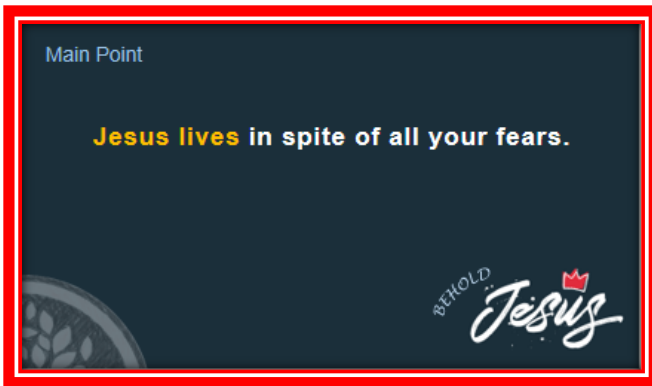
Perhaps current events in our government or society have fueled an undercurrent of fear and cynicism in your soul? In your honest moments you sense yourself

isolating and insulating yourself from broken people in hard places, because you’re afraid of what Christlike engagement with a sinful world might cost you.

Or maybe you’re wrestling significantly with the fear of man? Even this morning, you have wondered what others really think about you, or your outfit, or your hair. Your fear of others’ opinions about you is constipating your worship of Jesus, perhaps even muting your desire to sing aloud in the freedom of true praise among the congregation.

There are obviously many ways sinful fear can raise its ugly head in our lives: Some of us watch the baptisms and immediately recoil saying I’d never humble myself like that in front of my church family. Others of us are so afraid of failure that we exert a phenomenal amount of energy in micromanaging our risks and our relationships so that we are never out truly of control. We sinfully fear failure, or loss, or even death to the point that we give fear functional control in our life and fall short of the glory of God.

All of us can relate to sinful fear at some level. So when you are afraid, remember the good news before us today. Jesus is alive! The main point for our study is simply this,



Jesus lives in spite of all your fears.

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. If Jesus stayed dead, then we'd have no hope for freedom from sinful fear. Fear reigns as long as King Jesus is dead.

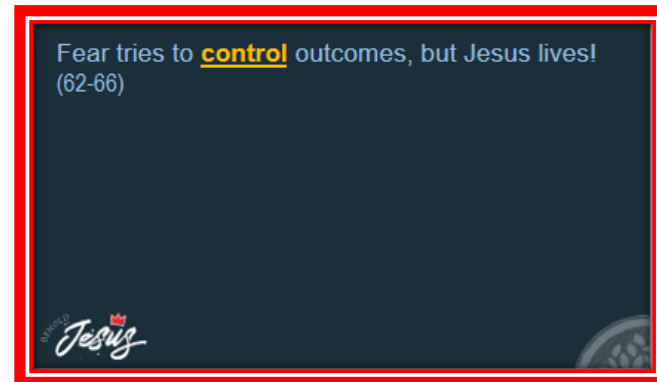
But Jesus lives! In spite of all your fears, Jesus lives, and the resurrection of Jesus means that His followers no longer need to be afraid.

The resurrection of Jesus shines a brilliant light into the darkest fears of our loneliness, uncertainty, discouragement, and opposition. We need not fear, now that Jesus is here!

Matthew reveals Jesus' resurrection book-ended by sinful fear. If our passage today was a sandwich, the two buns would represent how the religious leaders acted in sinful fear to Jesus' resurrection. And the savory meat would be **verses 1-10 of chapter 28** where Jesus' resurrection

is revealed and twice the command is given to, *Do not be afraid.*

So let's first dive into verses **62-66 of chapter 27** where we see how,



Sinful fear tries to control outcomes, but Jesus lives!

Fear and control are cojoined twins. Whenever you are afraid, you will try to control others or outcomes.¹ And that's exactly how we see the religious leaders behaving in our text.

On Friday, (which is referred to as the "day of Preparation" in **verse 62**),² the religious leaders had convinced Rome to crucify Jesus. So you would think Saturday would be a day of satisfying rest for the Jewish leaders. Jesus, their biggest problem, was now dead! But fear is a tormenting master who never lets its subjects rest.

¹ This is why we teach that the biblical opposite of fear is love; c.f. 1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:7.

² Friday was the day to "prepare" for resting on the Sabbath, or Saturday.

C.f. Luke 23:56; John 18:14. During the Passover celebrations, the Sabbath was considered to be a high Sabbath, and its observance was especially regarded.

So now, even though it's Sabbath of Passover weekend, the Jewish leaders ceremonially defile themselves by entering the Roman praetorium³ to seek Pilate's help once again.

I wonder how Pilate reacted when these fearful leaders interrupted his Saturday morning: "They're back already? Didn't we just bury their problem with Jesus last night? Now that Jesus is dead, what fears could possibly be troubling them now?"

We see their fear exposed in **verse 63**,

Sir, we remember how that imposter said, while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise." Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, and the last fraud will be worse than the first.

These leaders feared losing their religion. They feared losing their power over the people. A living Jesus was a huge threat to Jewish tradition and customs, for Jesus often exposed their hypocrisy and taught against their greedy oppression of God's people.

But as soon as Jesus was dead, these fearful leaders remembered how Jesus had predicted his own resurrection after 3 days.

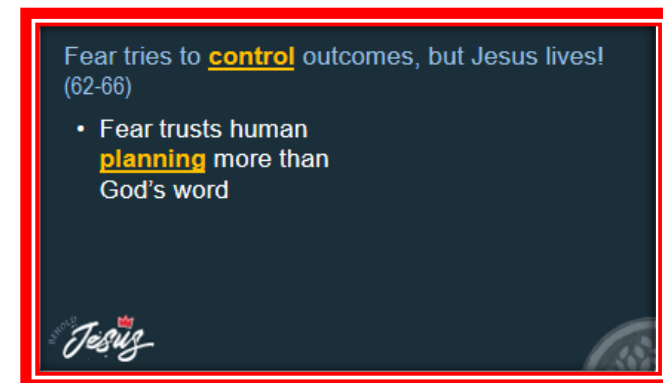
Remember, that these leaders didn't doubt Jesus' ability to do supernatural miracles. No one could dispute that Jesus had supernaturally brought Lazarus back to life

just a week or two earlier.⁴ So they didn't dispute Jesus' power, they simply attributed His power to Satan.⁵

But the last thing they wanted was for anyone to think that Jesus rose from the dead, just as He said he would do, after 3 days. The resurrection of Jesus – real or perceived – would be the proverbial "nail in the coffin" for Jewish religion as they knew it.

But two different times, when the Pharisees had asked Jesus to give them a sign that He was truly the Messiah,⁶ Jesus had responded with "the sign of the prophet Jonah,"⁷ clearly predicting that he would rise from the dead after 3 days, just like Jonah returned from the belly of the fish after 3 days.

But listen friends,



Fear always trusts human planning more than God's word.

³ John 18:28

⁴ John 11:1-44

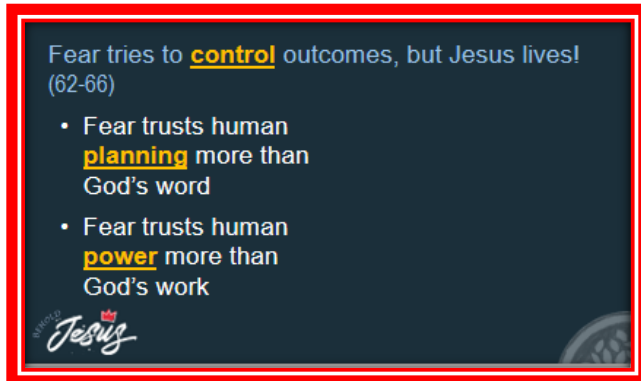
⁵ Matthew 12:24

⁶ Matthew 12:38; 16:1

⁷ Matthew 12:39-40; 16:4

These fearful leaders clearly remembered what Jesus had said. They refused to believe it, and so now they fearfully plan how they can make sure to keep a dead man dead.

They appeal to Rome, the greatest human power on the earth at the time, to help them keep Jesus in His grave.



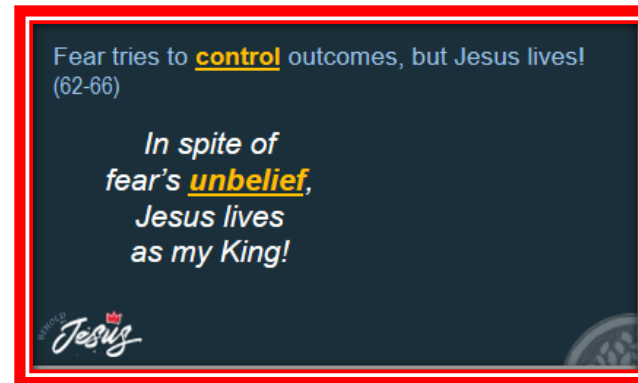
After all, Fear always trusts human power more than God's work.

I wonder if Pilate's response in **verse 65** is a bit sarcastic? *You have a guard of soldiers. Go make the grave as secure as you can.*

Go see if your human planning and human power is strong enough to keep Jesus dead!

So in **verse 66**, the Jewish leaders and the Roman Government unwittingly join forces to help prove that Jesus' resurrection was real. For their military guard only ends up proving there's no human explanation for why Jesus was no longer in the grave on Sunday morning.

You see,



In spite of fear's unbelief, Jesus lives as my King!

Fear rejects God's word in unbelief. Fear only trusts human wisdom and human power. So let me ask you:

Is there any area of your life where you are blatantly rejecting God's Word out of fear?

Maybe you know that God tells you to forgive, but you're afraid of how costly your obedience will be, so you're just trusting in your own coping skills to secure your future.

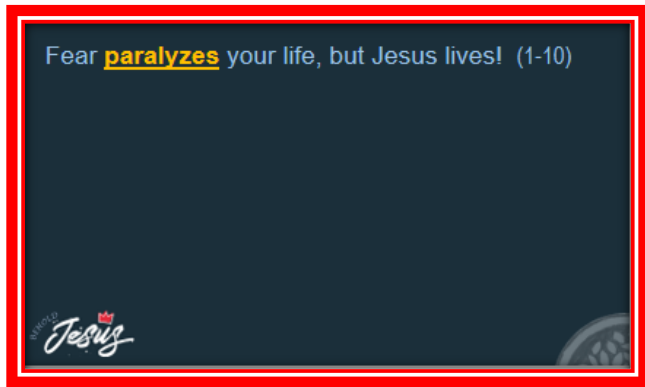
Or maybe God is calling you to step out in significant generosity or ministry, but your fear is trying to avoid any risk of you looking like a failure or displeasing others.

Loved ones, please listen. Jesus lives. Fear lost all its power when Jesus rose from the grave. No amount of fearful planning or strategizing is able to prevent God's word and work from being fulfilled.

Ask yourself, are you trying to guard your life from Jesus? Nobody can politely manage Jesus and keep Him just where you want Him. Jesus is alive!

So believe His word and submit to His Spirit's work. Because in spite of fear's unbelief, Jesus now lives as our King!

Now let's turn our attention to the beginning of **chapter 28** where we see how sinful,



Fear paralyzes your life... but Jesus lives!

Early Sunday morning a group of women headed out for Jesus' tomb. While the other gospels speak of other women with them,⁸ **Matthew** simply highlights Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and John.

This is significant, since these women end up being the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. If the Gospel writers were fabricating the resurrection account, they certainly wouldn't have relied on female witnesses, since the first century did not accept women's testimony as legally binding. The fact that Jesus first reveals His resurrection to women is a testimony to the historical

⁸ Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1); Mary the mother of James and John and wife of Zebedee (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, Luke 24:10); Salome (Mark 16:1); and Joanna (Luke 24:10).

⁹ Galatians 3:28

accuracy of the account, and the dawning of a new age of equality among women and men in Christ.⁹

Verse 2 lets us know what happened shortly before the women arrived at the tomb. An earthquake occurred.¹⁰ **Verse 2** is like a narrator's flashback, describing how a heavenly angel descends to earth and causes both a physical earthquake to the tomb and a personal earthquake to the guards. (The word for "tremble" in **verse 4** has the same root as the word for "earthquake" in **verse 2**.)

And when these guards saw the tomb supernaturally opened, and found themselves unexpectedly in the presence of a powerful heavenly messenger, **verse 4** says,

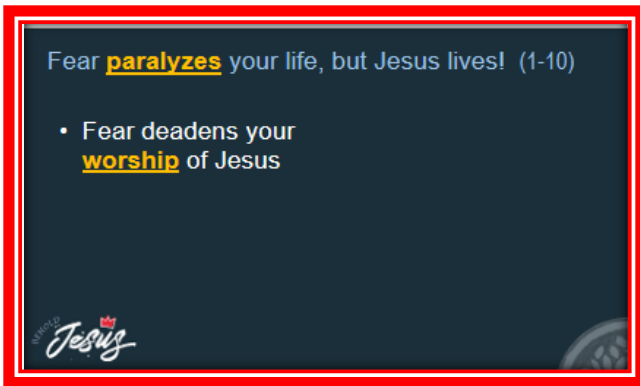
And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

Isn't it ironic to notice that guards of a dead man became like dead men at the very moment Jesus rose from the dead?

Because listen carefully, sinful fear will always paralyze you. These men had all of the human power of the Roman military at their disposal – they were hardened warriors, but they immediately passed out and fainted in fear at the sight of one angel.

So note this dear church,

¹⁰ This is the second earthquake since Jesus' death. The first earthquake occurred the moment Jesus died when the graves and veil of the temple were ripped open (Matthew 27:51-54)



Fear always deadens your worship of Jesus.

You can't worship Jesus if you're still trying to control your own life and trust your own resources. If you're trying to manage Jesus, and keep Him only in the place you have for Him in your life, then you aren't worshipping Him. You are actually afraid of Him, and your fear will make you no better than a dead person when you actually personally encounter His power or presence.

We see this same lesson illustrated another way when the women show up and the angel tells them in **verse 5**,

Do not be afraid. Literally, stop being so fearful. For I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.

You ladies came to the tomb to show your love to Jesus' crucified body. But He is not here, for He was raised just as He promised you! But don't let your fear paralyze and

deaden your worship. *Come, see the evidence for Jesus' resurrection for yourself, and worship Him!*

After all, their fear probably shouted all kinds of rational reasons why they should turn and run away in this moment. A holy brilliant being is speaking to them! The tomb is sitting empty! A Roman seal had been broken, and they might now be implicated in the crime! They should come back later in the daylight with others.

But church, worshipping Jesus is never safe. And the best cure for selfish fear is the fear of the Lord. When God commands you to come, you must draw near. You must see and believe that Jesus lives! His grave is empty just as He said it would be!

O friend, are you weary and burdened from your unbelief and fear? Only Jesus can give you rest.¹¹ Come and worship our resurrected Lord! Sinful fear only paralyzes your life with self-preserving inactivity, but you do not need to be afraid anymore. Jesus lives!

In **verse 8** the women joyfully go to tell the rest of the disciples when, look at this, in **verse 9**, Jesus Himself appears, and says "Good morning!"

Loved ones, notice how these women responded to the resurrection of Jesus in **verse 9**. They worshipped Him. And Jesus accepted their worship!¹² Immediately Jesus assured them, repeating,

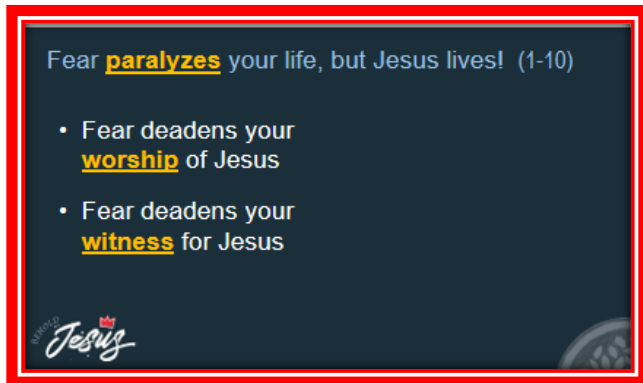
Do not be afraid, but go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.

¹¹ Matthew 11:28-29

¹² Contra other heavenly beings, i.e. Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9. Therefore

the fact that Jesus accepted the clear worship of these women is another evidence of His deity as the now resurrected God-Man.

In other words, Jesus understood that sinful

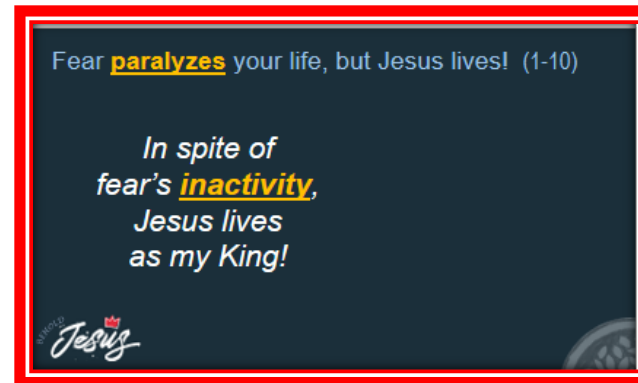


Fear deadens your witness for Jesus.

No Christ-follower can fulfill God's purpose for our life on earth if we are paralyzed by fear. Fear will never find a good time to share the good news of Jesus' resurrection with others.

Your fear will always say tomorrow is a better day to witness to your neighbor or coworker about how their sins can be forgiven simply by trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Fear has a huge mute button for Christian witness, paralyzing your witness with lies like you don't know enough theology, or you're not living a godly enough life yet, or you might lose their relationship or get rejected if you tell others how they can worship God through faith's obedience to His Word.

But Jesus lives in spite of all your fears! The resurrection of Jesus should be one of the greatest motivations for our witness to sinners!



Because In spite of fear's inactivity, Jesus lives as my King!

And when my King Jesus tells me to go and tell others about His resurrection, my wonder and awe at His resurrected glory overcomes my fear and instead delights my living as a witness for Him.

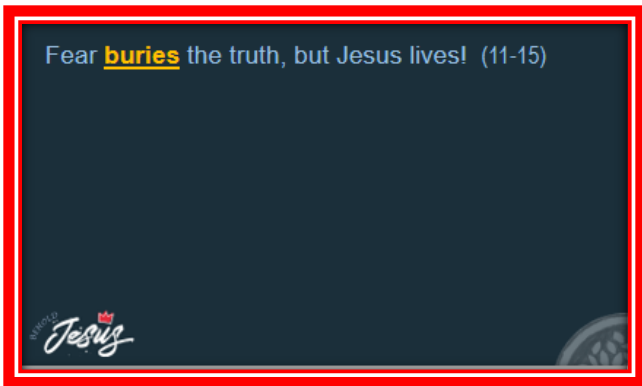
Now Jesus had earlier told His disciples that after His resurrection, they were to meet Him back in the Galilee of the Gentiles.¹³ where He would commission their disciple-making mission to the ends of the world.¹⁴

So **verse 10** ends with these women overcoming their fear and pursuing greater worship and witness for Jesus as they go to tell others that Jesus lives, and that they should obey all the commands He had given them!

But meanwhile, in **verse 11**, we see how fear responds to Jesus' resurrection.

¹³ Matthew 26:32; 28:7

¹⁴ Matthew 28:16-20



Fear buries the truth, but Jesus lives! (11-15)

Fear lives on lies, and tries to suppress the truth with lies. But Jesus truly lives. So **verses 11-15** explain the backstory to the popular lie that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body.

After they awaken from fear's paralysis and find the tomb empty, some of the guard return to the Jewish leaders and explain how there was an earthquake early Sunday morning, and a holy angel appeared and rolled away the stone from the tomb, and sat down on it, and that's the last thing they remember.

No one could deny that the tomb was empty. So after consulting together for some time in **verse 12**, they fearfully agreed their best option was to spread a lie. They gave a large bribe of hush money to the soldiers and assured them that they would keep Pilate from punishing them for "falling asleep" on their watch.

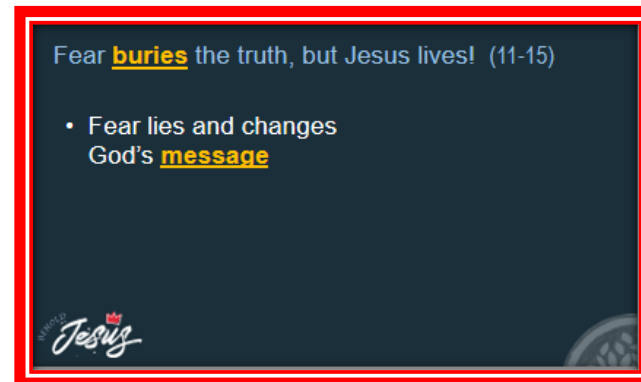
But this lie was desperate, for if the soldiers had truly fallen asleep, how could they know who stole the body?

And how likely is it for the entire band of Roman soldiers to all fall asleep at the same time?

And certainly, this lie didn't account for the supernatural events the soldiers did witness, and all the physical appearances of Jesus to hundreds after His resurrection.¹⁵

Jesus lives in spite of all of our fears.

So pay attention and recognize that,



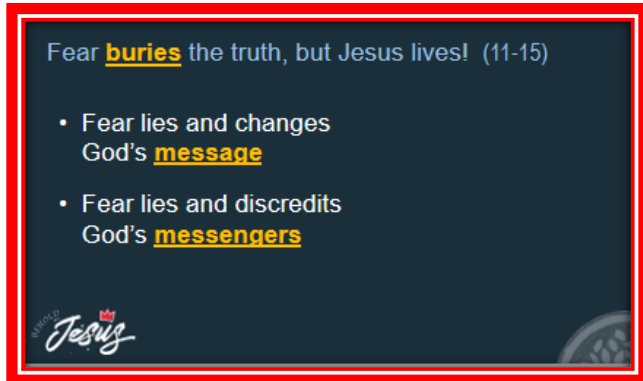
Fear always lies and changes God's message.

The true message that the religious leaders should have spread was that Jesus was God, and that He rose from the dead exactly 3 days after He was crucified and buried... just as He said He would do. But these fearful leaders changed the good news of Jesus' resurrection into a message about the disciples' fraud.

Their fear led them not only to lie about the truth, but to slander and discredit those who would tell the truth.

¹⁵ C.f. 1 Corinthians 15:4-8

Because,



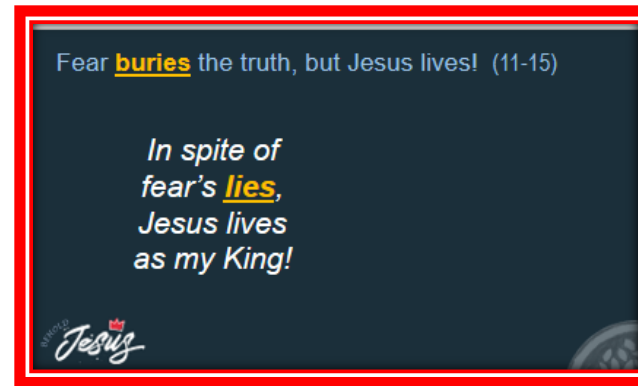
Fear always lies and discredits God's messengers.

So let's get personal. Does your fear ever lead you to change God's gospel, or discredit those who are telling the truth about God's substitutionary death on behalf of sinners?

Maybe you are afraid of offending someone. So you leave sin out of your gospel presentation, and turn God's message of salvation into some form of a self-improvement speech. Or you discredit any fire-and-brimstone preacher who is bold enough to call sinners to repentance or talk about the eternal fire of hell.

Or maybe, these days, you rationalize away any part of God's message that offers freedom from all kinds of sexual sins that our culture is currently affirming as "woke identity."

You see, fear buries the truth with lies...but in spite of all our fear, Jesus lives! No amount of lying unbelief can change the reality that Jesus actually rose from the dead.



In spite of fear's lies, Jesus lives as my King!

So He gets to define our message, and only those messengers who faithfully proclaim His message are to be commended and honored.

Loved ones, fear tries hard to keep Jesus dead and buried. But the end of Matthew's gospel makes it clear:



Jesus lives in spite of all your fears.

So then, we should no longer live according to sinful fear. Jesus is alive! The grave could not hold Him! No human scheming was powerful enough to keep Him in the tomb.

Therefore, I want to urge all of us today,



Do not be afraid. Instead, Come, Believe, Go, and Tell!

These are the four commands that are found right in **verses 6-7**. Come and draw near to God. See that Jesus was raised from the dead to reign forever as your Savior and King. Go quickly and tell others that Jesus is alive. You no longer have to live under your fears.

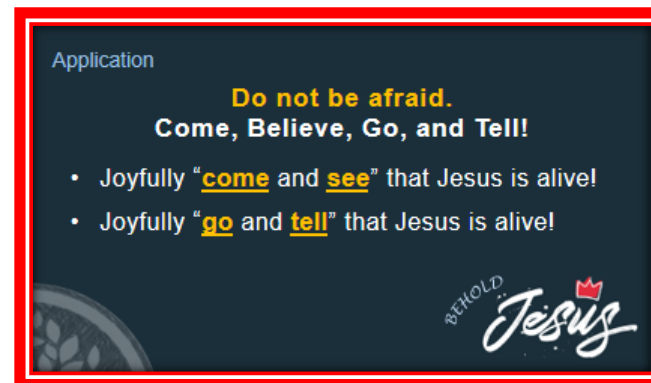
So if you are listening now and you are convicted of your sin that separates you from our holy God, please allow your soul to marvel at what we have read today.



Joyfully believe: "come and see" that Jesus is alive!

You must only turn from your sin, and respond in faith to the invitation that God is giving you today. Believe on the Lord Jesus. Surrender your control, and come to Him with all your fears. See that He is good. His Word is trustworthy. Jesus never breaks His promises. He died to pay for your sin penalty, and He rose from the dead to prove that His payment was enough. Come and see that Jesus lives.

And then, Christian, after you come and see that Jesus has paid for your sins, you no longer have any reason to fear.



So joyfully obey our King: and "go and tell" your neighbors and coworkers that Jesus is alive!

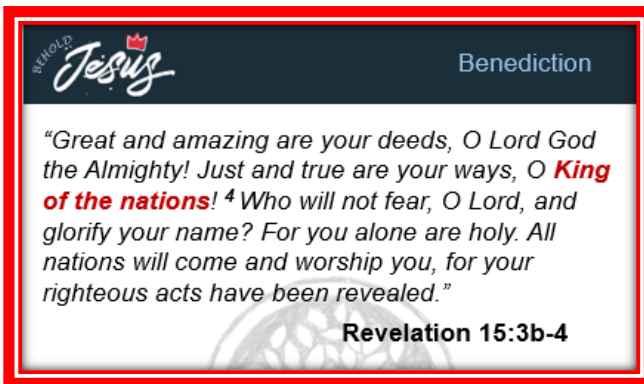
Sinful fear is one of the biggest obstacles to our faithful witness for Jesus. So joyfully allow God's resurrection to conquer your fear. Take the opportunities God gives you to humbly tell others of His substitutionary death and resurrection. Jesus lives in spite of all your fears. So behold King Jesus. He is alive. Fear Not! Jesus Lives!



Let's pray.

<<Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed>>

Let's pray our benediction together:



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.
Revelation 15:3b-4



Recommended Resources on Christ's Resurrection:

- Luke 24:36-49
- John 5:25; 11:25-26; 14:19-20
- Acts 1:3; 4:33; 17:31
- Romans 1:1-6; 4:24-25; 6:4-11; 8:34
- 1 Corinthians 15, esp. 1-8, 20-23
- Philippians 3:10-11
- Colossians 2:12-15
- 1 Thessalonians 4:14
- Hebrews 7:25
- 1 Peter 1:3

- <https://blog.tms.edu/resurrection-in-the-old-testament>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jesus-was-raised-to-show-his-power-over-death/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-most-repeated-command-in-the-bible>

- *Lifted*, Sam Allberry
- *The Case for Easter*, Lee Strobel

80th Anniversary Celebration @ 9:30am:

(Past, Praise, Prayer // Time, Thanksgiving, Trust)

We'll begin in the Worship Center then travel as families on a history tour to various locations around the campus that represent pivotal moments and milestones in the life of New Castle. Hear stories and sweet testimonies of ways God has blessed, provided, and led us through the decades. All ADEs, Sunday School, and nursery will combine for this interactive walk of praise – a celebration not to be missed.

Last Names:

- A-F - Stay in Family Center
- G-K - Intersection
- L-R - South Classroom
- S-Z - Chapel

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Matthew 28:11-15 and Romans 1:16. Have you ever been tempted to change God's message, or discredit someone who is boldly proclaiming God's saving grace for undeserving sinners? How does the reality of Jesus' resurrection conquer fear's lies in our evangelism?
2. Review Matthew 26:32; 28:7, 10, 16. Why do you think Jesus met with his disciples in Galilee after his resurrection, especially since the ascension took place back in Jerusalem 40 days later (Acts 1:4-12)?
3. How does Christ's Resurrection benefit us? Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 and discuss how vital the living Christ is to your daily life today.
4. Read 2 Timothy 1:7. How does fear increase your self-reliance while feeding your doubt in God's control? How does your fear deaden your own worship or witness of Jesus?

Reminders:

- Take Jackets as we'll all meet outside in the parking lot for prayer at the last station
- There are commemorative ornaments for each household to take as a reminder of God's faithfulness throughout the life of NCBC. They will be on the Family Center entrance tables.
- **2 Thessalonians 3:3** The Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.
- **Psalms 33:4** For the Word of the Lord is upright, And all His work is done in faithfulness.
- **2 Timothy 2:13** If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.