

## ***Our Savior Lives***

Matthew 28:1-20 - NCBC, March 27, 2016

Main Point: **The risen Christ secures our salvation and empowers our ministry.**

- **Behold, Christ defeated death** (v. 1-7)
  - “He has risen...”
- **Behold, Christ keeps His promises** (v. 6-8)
  - “as He said”
- **Behold, Christ meets us personally** (v. 9-10)
  - “Greetings!”
- **[Behold, Christ is still rejected** (v. 11-15)]
- **Behold, Christ is with us** (v. 16-20)
  - “I am with you always”

Application: **Do not be afraid. Go and tell!**

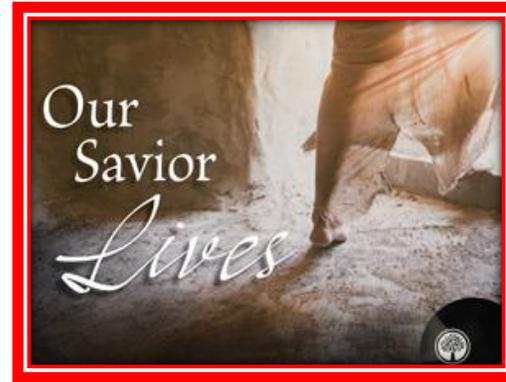
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### **Opening Announcements:**

*Welcome center*

He is Risen!

<<Mercy Tree>>



Death has died, love has won  
Hallelujah! Jesus Christ has overcome  
He has risen from the dead

The resurrection of Jesus Christ secures our new birth,<sup>1</sup> our justification,<sup>2</sup> and our sanctification<sup>3</sup> as God's beloved children. Every part of our experience as a Christian finds its grounding in the truth of Christ's resurrection. May our hearts celebrate and rejoice this morning as we offer Him our humble submission and obedient worship.

I now invite you to prepare for our reading of God's Word from **Matthew 28**. If you do not have a Bible with you today, our ushers are coming to give you a Bible. Please catch their attention as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 1:3, Eph 2:5-6

<sup>2</sup> Romans 4:23-25

<sup>3</sup> Romans 6:3-12; Col 3:1-4

our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

Let's turn our attention now to this incredible account of our Savior's resurrection. You will find our text this morning on page **835** of the Bibles we've handed out. Please stand in honor God's Word, as I read just the first 7 verses from **Matthew 28** in the English Standard translation:

*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. <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. <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."*

**These are wonderful words of life.**

You may be seated.

**Let's Pray.**

In the fourteenth century a merchant by the name of Marco Polo traveled to Central Asia and China. After 24

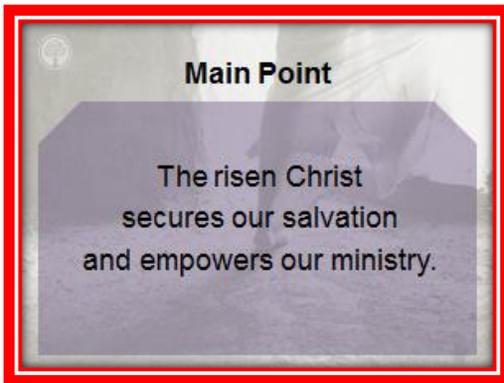
years of travel, he decided to return home to Italy writing articles describing the wonders he had seen and the magnificent cities he had visited. But his descriptions were so far beyond the imagination of his European readers, that he was accused of lying. In fact when he lay dying at the age of 70, his friends asked him to confess his lies. They did not wish for their friend to face God with these wild tales on his conscience.

But Polo's last answer to those who refused to believe his accounts speaks for those of us who have believed in Christ's resurrection and experienced the benefits of it. For Mr. Polo's final testimony remained fixed, "I never told the half of it."<sup>4</sup>

This is the cry of my heart as I stand before you this morning to proclaim the glories of Christ's resurrection this Easter morning. I have neither the ability nor enough time today to communicate the half of the glories of our Risen Savior to you! But with God's help I pray that His grace would employ this foolishness of preaching to awaken our hearts to greater faith and worship. For Our Savior lives— and this morning from Matthew chapter 28 we celebrate that

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<sup>4</sup> Lawson, Leroy, *Matthew: Unlocking the Scriptures for You*

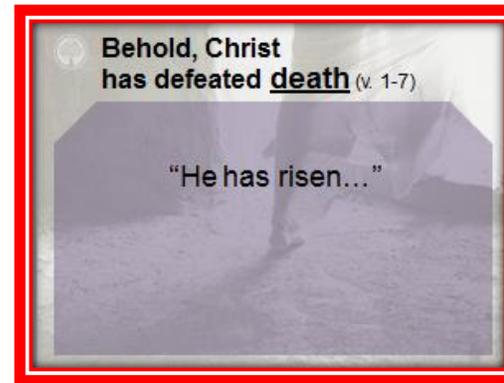


Our risen Christ secures our salvation and empowers our ministry.

Every part of our salvation from our regeneration to our final glorification is secured and finished through the raising of Christ from the dead. No wonder the church explodes with joy on Resurrection Sunday!!

Our God is not dead. We are one with Him again. We can rise up from the graveyards of our lives with real hope and real life together.

Now as we read through Matthew 28, there's 6 different times where Matthew uses an interjection translated as "Behold" to highlight a different aspect of his testimony. Behold means to stop – pay attention – consider this. Some translations use the word "Suddenly" ... marking the impact of what is happening. And we meet the first such interjection in verse 2 of our text – where we observe that **Christ defeated death** (v. 1-7)



In verse 1 we find two of the Mary's joining up with some other women and leaving very early to go and attempt to anoint Christ's dead body one last time. But then verse 2,

*Behold* – Matthew grabs us by the chin and looks straight into our eyes this morning and says – you need to understand something before I tell you what happened to the women in verse 5... So the best way to understand verses 2-4 is that Matthew is backtracking and catching us up on what had happened before the women arrived at the tomb...

*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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.*

Remember what happened at the moment of Christ's death on the cross? Look across the page in your Bible to **Matthew 27:51** – the curtain of the temple was torn in two, and there was a great earthquake. Now 3 days later

– in the wee hours of the morning – the earth violently shakes again to give witness to the cosmic significance of the death of death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

A heavenly angel was sent as God’s messenger to roll away the stone and help explain the events to Christ’s disciples. All of this was too much for the war-hardened Roman soldiers ...and they literally fainted in fear.

So by the time these women approach the tomb at the break of dawn on Sunday... the guards had already fled through the darkness into the city...leaving the tomb open and empty for all to see.

Now don’t miss this. The resurrected Christ didn’t need the stone to be removed before He could leave.<sup>5</sup> The angel was not sent for Christ’s benefit... but for ours! The removal of the stone let the disciples see that Christ had been raised, and the tomb was now empty!

So in verse 5 – the angel immediately speaks to the surprised and terrified women – words of comfort and assurance.

Stop being afraid. *Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, [literally, He has been raised. God the Father and God the Spirit worked together to raise God the Son from the dark domain of death.<sup>6</sup> The prophecy was true. He has been raised, just] as he said.*

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<sup>5</sup> John 20:19

<sup>6</sup> Romans 6:4; Gal 1:1; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:11

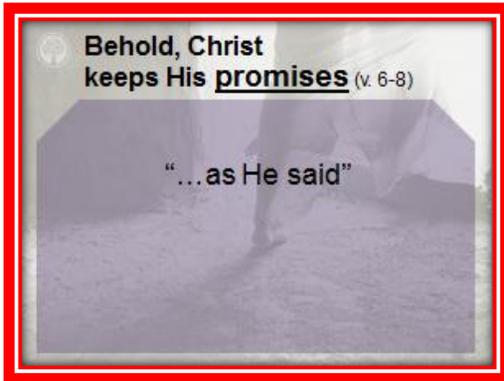
*Come, see the place where he [used to be laying].*

Seeing is believing in an empty tomb – but wait – it’s not completely empty is it? Jesus is gone... but the burial clothes are still there – completely undisturbed – just as they were when Nicodemus and Joseph laid the body to rest – only now there’s no body in them.

John 20 devotes several verses to the miracle of Jesus passing through his graveclothes in such a way that the wrappings were left as an empty cocoon as evidence of His supernatural resurrection.

How do you see the empty tomb this morning? Behold – He is not here – for He has risen! Look at the horror of sin – tombs ooze the smell of death...and six feet of dirt make all men equal. But gaze into the tomb of Jesus and see that He who was once dead is now alive. Sin’s power has been broken through His resurrection. Life has been won for you. Do you believe this?

Behold this... our King is alive, and you can trust your life to Him. For,



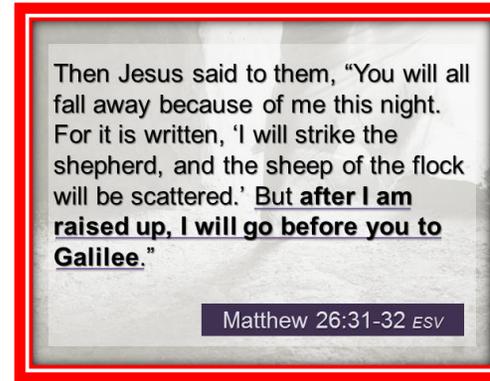
### Behold, Christ keeps His promises (v. 6-8)

How did the heavenly messenger relate it in verse 6?

*He is not here, for he has risen...as he said.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfilled prophecy that Christ Himself had repeatedly given in the months leading up to his death. In **Matthew 12:40** Christ foretold that the Son of Man will spend 3 days and 3 nights in the earth, just as Jonah had done in the fish. And then starting in **chapter 16** He repeatedly told the disciples how "*he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*"<sup>7</sup> Finally in **chapter 26** – just hours away from the cross... as Jesus leads the disciples from the upper room across the Kidron Valley to Gethsemane, he again predicts His resurrection saying,

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 16:21, c.f. 17:22-23, 20:17-19



*"After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."*

Don't miss this loved ones. Our Savior keeps His Word. Death cannot keep God's promises from their fulfillment. So no matter how hopeless or dead your life might seem ... there is hope for you today! Hope from a King who Himself conquered the death brought on by our sins.

Matthew uses the word "behold" actually two times in verse 7 –

Behold – *he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.* Behold, *I have told you.*

The angelic message at the tomb was clear and firm – Our Savior Lives in fulfillment of the words that He told you. Now remember – He said beforehand that after He was raised up, He would go before you to Galilee... so you can take Him at His Word – If you go to Galilee you will see Him there – just as He said!

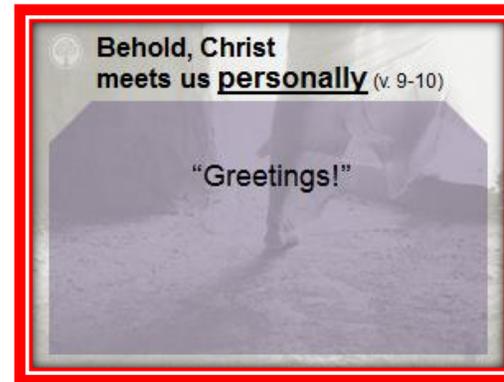
Do you trust that God will always keep His Word? Perhaps today you are honestly still trying to decide if you can really trust the God of the Bible. After all it's a huge thing to give control of your life up to someone else.

Can I just say – if that's you this morning... I'm so glad you're here. Your honest questions are welcomed by our good God. He is not threatened by your doubts. No – instead He graciously has revealed His character and His plan of salvation to us through His Holy Scriptures – and He invites you to seek Him through His Word. So bring your doubts and questions to God – pray that He would increase your faith – and read His Word for yourself.

And you will find that there is no greater joy than trusting your life to a God who did for us what we could never do for ourselves – for Jesus is the King of Glory who humbled Himself and was crucified, taking the death penalty of our sins upon Himself in our place, then rising again after 3 days to prove that our salvation had been completed.

You see Christianity is fundamentally different than all the other religions of the world. For every religion except Christianity seeks to answer the question about what man needs to do in order to be good enough to be accepted by God. But Christianity is the pure and undefiled religion that alone teaches that our God did Himself what was entirely necessary for us to be made good enough to be accepted by Him. Christianity is the religion of divine accomplishment – all other religions teach some form of human achievement.

The God of the Bible can be trusted. And look – He desires to,



...meet you personally (v. 9-10)

Can you picture the adrenaline-charged women running away from the angel and the empty tomb with fear and great joy ...and then verse 9 we find another,

Behold.

*Jesus met them and said, Greetings!*

This would be funny if it wasn't so wonderful. The word Jesus used here in his greeting was a common, everyday salutation – just like "Hi" or "Good Morning."

There was no hallelujah chorus playing in the background, no flash of lightning from the heavens... just a supernatural encounter with the living Christ in the daily mundane and ordinary experiences of life. "Hey."

And dear friend – every time you open up the Words of Christ and begin to read – Christ is meeting with you personally. Hello my child. Christ desires a personal relationship with you as an individual. You are His beloved. He loves you. He died and rose again so that you might walk in newness of life. So that His Spirit might dwell in you and He would be your God.

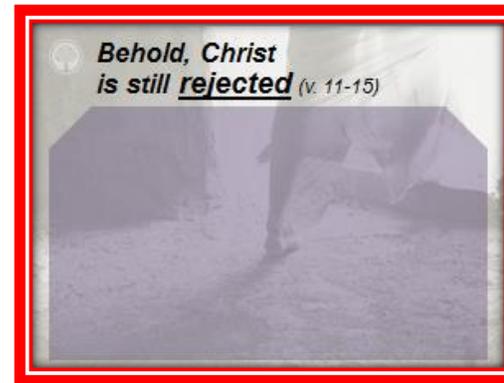
Do you know Christ personally today? I'm not asking if you believe in Him... I'm asking if you really know Him.

How do you know if you really know Him personally? Well, how do you respond when He shows Himself to you through His Words?

The women in verse 9 worshipped Him. Awe. Wonder. Praise. Clinging to his physical feet – (for indeed his resurrection body is a real physical body) – they adored Christ.

Jesus calls those who really know Him and follow Him His friends... for there is no greater joy than being in the presence of the King as His adopted and beloved heir.

And yet, we must behold the realities of verses 11-15... for even for all of the infallible proofs of His resurrection,

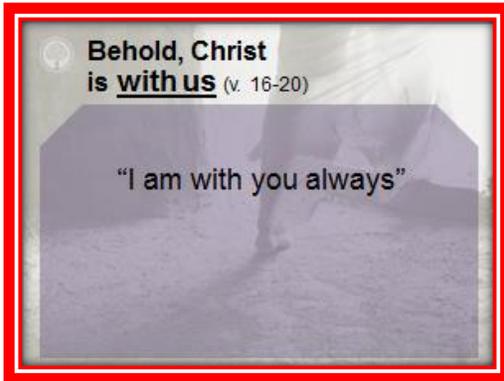


Christ is still often rejected (v. 11-15)

Even in the face of undeniable evidence, many people still refuse to believe that God can be so good, so gracious, and so forgiving. Pride hates grace. Pride hates help. And so in verses 11-15 we see the blindness of religious pride that justifies a lie that only serves to give further proof to the fact that the tomb was indeed empty.

So when you think about your response to the historical reality of Jesus Christ's physical resurrection – at least be honest about the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a real person – who died a real death, who was raised in a real resurrection. Will you join with the disciples in their joy and believe today?

We encounter our last "Behold" at the very end of this chapter, where we are empowered by the reality that,



### Behold, Christ is with us (v. 16-20)

Now that Christ is alive and raised up from the dead – He is present with all of us who trust in Him!

Let's review the setting first.

In verse **16** the disciples travel the several day journey from Jerusalem to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had previously told them to meet Him. Remember in **chapter 26** He promised to meet them in Galilee after His resurrection. The angels at the tomb instructed the women to tell the disciples that Jesus would go before them to Galilee where they would see Him there. Even Jesus reminded the women in verse **10** to "*go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.*"

Now to be clear the disciples had already met with the resurrected Christ several times prior to this prearranged appointment. In fact the Gospels tell us of 10 total appearances of Jesus between the resurrection and the ascension. But Matthew's Gospel puts particular

emphasis upon this specific meeting of the Risen King with His disciples. Why Galilee? What's the special significance that Matthew wants us to take away from this resurrection appearance?

The Galilee of the Gentiles represented the world at large – it was populated by Jews and Greeks alike. And with the exception of just 1 week, Matthew's Gospel focuses all of Jesus' earthly ministry in Galilee<sup>8</sup>... so if you're one of the 11 disciples coming back to your Galilean home some 20-30 days after the resurrection... you're coming back to the familiar sights, sounds, smells, and reminders of Christ's supernatural ministry. Everything (and everyone) around you is reminding you of the King's authority and power in His teaching, healing, calming the sea, forgiving sinners.

So I wonder if this helps us understand the significance behind Christ's selection of Galilee as the place where He would choose to reveal Himself not just to the 11 disciples, but more than likely this was the event spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15:6 where Christ revealed Himself to more than 500 disciples at one time – for many had heard that they could see Christ in Galilee after His resurrection.<sup>9</sup>

So what did Christ communicate to His disciples at this special meeting in Galilee after He was raised from the dead?

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<sup>8</sup> From 4:12 to 18:35 He is in the area of Galilee

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:6

Verse 18 – *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* [Yes that was becoming more and more clear to all the disciples. After all – what more authority and could He have besides resurrection power?] *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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And **behold**, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Before He ascended to His Father in glory, He gathered all the disciples together at Galilee – in the very region of all the nations – at the very place where Israel’s own spiritual leaders had rejected their Messiah and Christ had given the promise to build His church... at this place He gives the disciples their defining commission – to make other disciples. In light of His sovereign Kingly authority, every one of His children is to give themselves to making disciples of all nations. But now Behold – take note of this loved ones... The great I AM is with you always.

Literally His final words are “I with you AM.” The Gospel of Matthew puts the highest emphasis upon this truth at the close of His Gospel account – for in the first chapter of Matthew, he writes,

*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, (which means, God with us.).<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 1:23

So now the Gospel of Matthew bookends with this same truth – Christ is with us! He is Immanuel. The presence of the risen King empowers our ministry to make disciples of all nations – even of those who initially reject Him. For our Savior lives, and He is with us always!

Church -



The risen Christ secures our salvation and empowers our ministry.

In 8 of the 10 post-resurrection appearances of Christ – an explicit commission is given to go and tell others of the joy of our risen King. Here we see these commands in verses 7 and 10, and then finally in the last three verses of this Gospel. Once you come and see that the tomb is empty – you must not



...be afraid. Go and tell!

Our Savior Lives! All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. He is God, and He is alive.

Will you worship Him? Will you offer your life and your lips in response to the wonder of His miraculous grace towards you? Will you posture your entire life here and now around this reality – that Christ is in you and you are in Him – so you are now able to share Him with others?

Making Disciples is not a program of Christ's church – at least it should not be. It's a lifestyle. Those who's chains have been broken by the Resurrection of Christ live in the middle of the Galilee of the Gentiles so that "the people are who walking in darkness might see a great light."<sup>11</sup> Jesus possesses all authority. He's sent us to make disciples of all nations. And behold – Jesus will be with us always.

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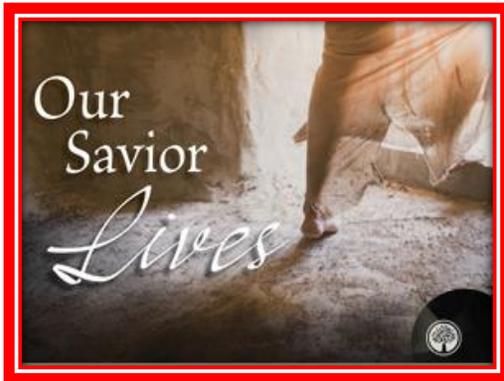
<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 9:1-2

So here's the reality – now that you've listened to this good news this morning – you have to make a decision how you are going to respond. It's actually not possible to leave here neutral to this message that the Risen Christ secures our salvation and empowers our ministry. Either you will believe God's Word is true, and you will respond in faith ... or you will reject His truth and continue to fortify your own soul in self-justified lies. And that choice exists today for every person here – so what's your decision this morning?

If you say, pastor – I'm just not there. I believe and all...but I'm not ready to follow Christ as one of His disciples... I'm not ready to be publicly identified with Christ through baptism...I'm not ready to obey all that Christ has taught us in His Word... then I want you to know very clearly that I don't judge you. I don't condemn you. In fact I love you. And I'm praying for you. And I want to do whatever is humanly possible to help you see that you no longer have to live as if Christ is still in the tomb.

But if today you desire the salvation that Christ has secured for us in His resurrection – then all you need to do is to ask God to save you. Confess your sins. Cry out to our Risen Savior! **You're not yet too dead for a resurrection!** He is waiting to welcome and receive you as His beloved friend.

<<Prayer>>



Church – Our Savior Lives. So go and tell others this good news. Prioritize your life around this mission. Make disciples who truly believe on Christ and express their faith publicly in believer's baptism. Make disciples who commit themselves to a local church so that they might be taught the truths of the faith. The resurrection has united you to Christ, and now He is with you – even to the end of the age.

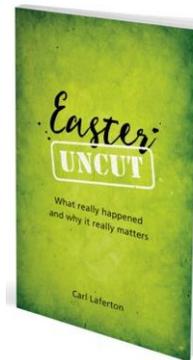
Let's pray. **Closing prayer.**

<<In Christ Alone>>

### **Benediction**

*<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.  
Hebrews 13:20-21*

### **Today's Giveaway Resource**



*Easter Uncut takes readers through one man's account of a week of his life: a week of great plans, shattered dreams, nightmare scenes and renewed hope. It's what we call Easter, without any of the fluffy bits.*

*This accessible, faithful book aims to engage, inform and excite non-Christians by taking them to the wonder of the message of the cross and empty tomb. Take one and ask God who you could give it to this week to help spread the good news!*