

Unstoppable

Matthew 27:62-28:20

Introduction

NJFK—dead Dogwood branch and blossoming Dogwood branch; winter cannot stop spring from coming; the night cannot stop the rising sun. Death could not stop life from breaking through. Christ is risen! Unstoppable.

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, while he was still alive, '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.

Matthew 28

¹ 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. **16** Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed

them. **17** And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. **18** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** 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, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

I draw your attention this morning to the three commands the angel at the tomb gave the women. Later in the passage Jesus Himself echoes what the angel said. The whole passage underscores these three fitting responses to the resurrection of Jesus.

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."

1. Don't Fear: He Is Risen!
2. Come See: He Is Risen!
3. Go Tell: He Is Risen!

1. Don't Fear: He Is Risen!

Matthew 28:5-6a

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."

These are the first words Jesus gives them as well: Matthew 28:10

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid."

Do not be afraid. This repeated command reminds us that darkness and danger has dominated the disciples' lives for a long time. In recent days and weeks it had become overwhelming. Despite the self-confident assertions of Peter that he would never forsake the Lord, he had denied Him three times, and all the disciples had fled for their lives. Even now they were in hiding.

The most powerful men in the Jewish nation were trying to stamp out the very memory of Jesus and were prepared to go after His followers with a vengeance. They had gained access to the power of Rome to execute Jesus. It was hard to imagine that there could be any hope at all that Christianity would survive the crushing blow.

If these wicked men could take out the promised Messiah Himself despite all His unparalleled preaching and mighty miracles, what hope did the fishermen and tax

collectors who had followed Him have? They were utterly cowed. These women had come but to express their love for the murdered Messiah. It was the only thing left that they could do.

Do not be afraid. The angel's command literally reads, Don't You be afraid. In contrast to the Roman soldiers who trembled and fell on the ground as dead men when the angel of God appeared and rolled back the stone. The most common and natural immediate response to the sudden appearance of an angel of God is abject fear.

Angels are spirit beings created by God. They are His messengers. They are far mightier than human beings. You remember one angel killed all the firstborn of Egypt in the final plague that broke Pharaoh's resistance and forced him to let the people of Israel finally go free. Just one angel was all that was needed to wipe out 185,000 of Sennacherib's army besieging Jerusalem in the days of King Hezekiah. Whenever you read the eyewitness accounts of angel's making themselves visible to human beings, one of the first things the angel will say is "Fear not." Remember when the angels appeared to the shepherds outside Bethlehem on the night Jesus Christ was born?

Luke 2:10-11

10 . . . Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

But these women who loved Jesus and had believed in Him had nothing to fear from the heavenly beings. They were among God's beloved ones, and the angels His servants to minister to the needs of the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14).

Do not be afraid. You seek Jesus who was crucified. With Him died your hopes of redemption. With Him died your certainty that He was the promised deliverer from sin and its curse. He is not here because He is not dead. Not anymore. He has risen from the dead. Your confidence in Him was not misplaced. His crucifixion was not the end. He had to die to make a way for sinners back to God. But He has conquered death to fulfill His own words and those of Holy Scripture. Death could not hold Him.

Applications

- What are you afraid of that the risen Christ cannot overcome? Society's disdain and slander, mistreatment or persecution, disappointment or disillusionment, an uncertain future, sorrow, death?

- In what areas of your life do you need to hear and heed Christ's call not to be afraid?

If Jesus is mightier than all the schemes of man and stronger than death itself, if He has died as your substitute for your sin before God, delivering you from Divine judgment, what is left for you to fear?

2. Come See: He Is Risen!

Matthew 28:6

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

Come, see the place where he lay.

Matthew 28:7b

And behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.

The angel invites these women to see the empty tomb. The body is gone. No question. And then he promises that they are to go to Galilee where they will see Him with their own eyes.

But Jesus goes further. He does better than even what the angel promised. He meets them in person that very day.

Matthew 28:9

And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

This is no apparition, no spirit, no vision. Jesus rose bodily from the grave. Else they could not have taken hold of His feet.

Later in Galilee, we read—
Matthew 28:17

And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

We remember the account of doubting Thomas. He was not with the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them. But even he was finally convinced. He saw the wounds in Jesus hands and side. Jesus invited him to touch those wounds to verify that it was indeed the same Jesus Thomas loved and followed and had seen crucified.

The resurrection of Jesus is no myth concocted from wishful thinking among his bereaved followers. God has seen to it that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best attested events of human history. Those who cast it off as mere legend have not done their homework.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and

that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Even the enemies of Jesus unintentionally join in proving the reality of the resurrection. The chief priests, guardians of temple worship, and Pharisees, the separatists, guardians of Jewish ways in contrast to the Greek world, have worked hard to destroy Jesus, and they want to make sure they destroy His memory as well. They hated him with deadly hatred. They call Him an imposter and a fraud. Why so? He did not adhere to their traditions or bow to their abuse of leadership.

You remember that twice Jesus drove out the moneychangers in the temple and called the place a den of thieves. He refused to keep the manmade traditions of the fathers regarding how the Sabbath was to be kept. He also dared to associate with sinners, even with tax collectors and prostitutes.

The Pharisees would not enter Pilate's hall before lest they defile themselves for the Passover festival. But so determined they are in their hatred of Jesus that they violate their

own Sabbath—it was the day after the Preparation—and they enter to gain from Pilate a Roman guard for the tomb. They reveal the hypocrisy of their rules and separatist tradition. They were useful to prove their superiority to others, but when it suited their purpose they violate them to make sure their murder of an innocent man is not reversed by the resurrection He predicted.

They gain a Roman guard for the tomb of Jesus. They seal it so that no one may break the seal lest they be killed on the spot. They ensure that the fearful disciples now in hiding cannot possibly come steal the body.

But their plan backfires. Religious and secular power combined fail. When the angel rolls back the stone, the body is gone. Some of the soldiers come report to these leaders what happened. They got the eyewitness account, so they know. But it does not suit their agenda. They create their talking points as those in power so often do. While the guards were sleeping the disciples stole the body, they say. Spread that rumor. The guards were taking a huge risk. To give this story cast them as derelict in their duty, punishable by death. So the conspirators paid them handsomely for the risk and promised to cover for them with the governor.

But wait a minute. *If they were sleeping so soundly that this massive stone could be moved and the body stolen, how do they know the disciples stole the body. They did not see it happen. They were asleep.*

Furthermore, their story confirms that the body is gone. All anyone had to do to disprove the resurrection was to produce the body.

Do you remember the taunting words of these wicked men at the cross?

Matthew 27:39-42

39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads **40** and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." **41** So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, **42** "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him."

It's as if Jesus answered them, "I'll do you one better. Instead of coming down from the cross, how about I rise from the dead?"

As for those nowadays that say Jesus never really died, that he just swooned then revived in the cool of the tomb, they reveal that they know nothing about Roman crucifixion.

Roman soldiers were experts at killing people and they knew when people were dead. The Roman centurion had confirmed Jesus was dead by his spear thrust into His side, from which came blood and water, the fluid from the sack around the heart.

Christianity is not a mere code of ethics. It is not just a ceremonial tradition. It is not rooted in mysticism and philosophy. It comes from eyewitness history—firsthand accounts of what Jesus said and did. Living for Christ impacts our person history in the same way. The transformation that God works on the inside changes our real-life words and actions.

Applications

- Given all the historical evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, what else could you possibly ask for to know the truth about whether He is the Messiah, the Savior, and the risen Lord?
- What real-life practical evidence do you show of belonging to Jesus and following Him?

3. Go Tell: He Is Risen!

Matthew 28:7

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.

Matthew 28:10

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

Why Galilee?

Jesus began His ministry in this region. Not just Jews but people from many other nations lived there. Paganism all around. Why did Jesus spend so much time in this area of Israel?

Matthew 4:12-16

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

Matthew is quoting from Isaiah 9:1-2. The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali had been overrun by the Assyrians, who deported

many Jews from there and imported many Assyrians. What resulted was a mixture of Judaism and paganism—the Samaritan culture and religion. Remember Jesus' powerful interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well?

John 4:22-26

²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

You remember that she believed and went back into town telling everyone about Jesus. They came to see Him for themselves, and many of them also came to believe in Him as the promised Savior-King, the Messiah.

A few verses after Isaiah's reference to Galilee of the nations we read—

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

So why Galilee?

Jesus will ascend to heaven from the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem, but it is here in Galilee of the nations that Jesus will give the great commission to make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Make disciples—learners, followers; mentor all nations—all ethnicities (Galilee of the nations)

Going—while you are going, having gone
Baptizing—in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Teaching—to observe all I've commanded you

Had Jesus not risen from the dead there would be no good news to tell. There would be no disciples to make. There would only be memories of a martyr and a lost cause. But that is not the testimony of history.

Jesus predicted in Acts 1 that His gospel would go to all the world:

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

That's why we worship Jesus here today in what was then the uttermost part of the earth. Somebody went. Somebody told. Somebody made disciples. Until it finally reached us. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was far too significant to keep hidden. It proved that all Jesus said about Himself was true, that He is in fact the promised Savior of the world, the Lamb of God that takes away our sin and reconciles us to God, the King of an everlasting kingdom that will never pass away.

Applications

- Wherever you go, how are you making it your business to make disciples of the risen Lord?

- What are the names of the persons you are telling about Jesus?
- In what ways are you teaching them to observe what He has commanded us?

Conclusion

He is risen indeed!

No fear. No doubt. We dare not be silent.

1. Don't Fear: He Is Risen!
2. Come See: He Is Risen!
3. Go Tell: He Is Risen!

Closing Song: Resurrection Hymn

Summary of Applications

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- Wherever you go, how are you making it your business to make disciples of the risen Lord?
- What are the names of the persons you are telling about Jesus?
- In what ways are you teaching them to observe what He has commanded us?