

Series – Jesus

4 The Earthquake Felt Around the World

Matthew 28:1-10

If you have your Bible, I want to read to you about the morning of Jesus Resurrection from the book of Matthew. Turn to chapter 28.

1Now after the Sabbath (Sunday), as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2And behold, {“Behold.” When you find that word in the bible, it means, ‘wow.’ It’s an exclamation and a command. The word has a sense of getting you to stop, in awe and wonder and try to ponder what you have just seen or heard.}

Behold there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it. 3His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4And the guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

5But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”

8So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to bring His disciples word.

9And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.” (NKJV) **PRAYER**

The title of my message today is: **"The Earthquake Felt Around the World."**

For many years Nancy and I lived on SJAFB. When we got there, they had B-52's, KC-135 Tankers, and F-4 Fighter Jets.

And when those planes take off you can hear it and sometimes feel the ground and house around you vibrate. And this is subject to happen day or night. The amazing thing is that after a while, you don't even pay attention to it.

Whenever we had family members come and stay, they were shocked at how loud the aircraft were and how it shook the house sometimes, but after a few days and then they didn't notice it as much. The reason that happens is because of a mesh-like bundle of neurons situated in the brain stem called the reticular activating system (RAS). It is about the size of a little finger and two inches long.

The RAS, plays a critical role. It ensures that the brain does not have to process more data than it can handle. Its role is to pay attention to some things while ignoring others. Have you ever ridden in someone's car and say, "what's that noise?" And the owner says what noise? Or you go into someone's house and say, "what's that smell?" And they say what smell?

A property of the RAS is its rapid habituation to repetitive stimuli. In other words, the RAS recognizes the jet noise, the car noise, or the smell, and you don't have to think about it or be bothered by it because *your mind says I've heard that, smelled that, whatever, I don't have to process that anymore.*

I mention that because that's exactly the way it is for so many people when it comes to the Resurrection or attending an Easter Service.

We've heard the story. It's old news. It doesn't shake us anymore like it should. What we've been singing about and what I'm preaching today, is the greatest news in the history of the world.

If you take the greatest news stories from the beginning of time, and add it all up, it will only amount to one tiny grain of sand in the combined beaches of eternity. Nothing compares to the news that Jesus Christ died on the Cross, was buried, and on the third day He rose again from the dead. Unfortunately, to many people, it's religious white noise. It's like yeah, I've heard that.

My prayer today is that you would experience the resurrection like it's the very first time.

The earthquake that took place at the resurrection of Jesus, that shook the ground, should shake us and affect us and make a difference in our lives today, and every day for the rest of our lives.

Earthquakes are caused by movements within the Earth's crust and uppermost mantle. They range from weak events detectable only by seismometers, to sudden and violent events lasting many minutes which have caused some of the greatest disasters in human history.

Now I know that at Easter people come to church who don't normally come. Some folks come at Easter just out of devotion, for their love for the Lord and they just want to be there and to celebrate with God's people. Some people come out of obligation because they say, "You know it's Easter I really need to be in church." Some people come because Gramma said, "No lunch for you, if you don't come with me to church."

Whatever the reason that you're here, praise God that you're here. And I want you to know that Jesus loves you, and He wants to rock your world with the truth of the Good News.

I've never really paid attention to this or even preached about it that I can remember, but there was an earthquake that hit that resurrection morning. There was an earthquake on Good Friday when Jesus died on the cross. The earth shook. Mathew 27:50-53 says, ***"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."* (NKJV)**

In the Old Testament, when God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, the earth shook.

When God was speaking to Elijah on the mountain, the earth quaked before he spoke to him in a still small voice.

In Acts 16 when Paul and Silas were in prison, verse 26 says, ***"Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed."*** (NKJV)

In Matthew 24, ***Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him, "Tell us," They said, ...what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"***

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,'... You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8All these are the beginning of birth pains. (NIV)

The book of Revelations mentions, many times that in the Last Days, there will be ***lightnings, noises, thunderings, and earthquakes.***

God is powerful and wants to rock your world and change your life.

Truth number 1 that can rock your world - Jesus Christ is risen!

Don't let that be, "Yeah, I know that. Tell me something new." Let that resonate in your heart today. Jesus Christ is risen and He's risen indeed. That's what the angel said in verse 6: ***"He is not here, for He has risen just as He said."***

Mark, chapter 16 says that there were three women who went to the tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary, who was from a town called Magdala, M-A-G-D-A-L-A, on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. And the other Mary, (Mary was a common name.) is the mother of a disciple that we don't hear much about. His name was James, the son of Alpheus, or James the lesser, or little James. You have Peter, James, and John, the big three. That was big James but here's little James, and his mother's name was Mary.

And then you had Salome, the mother of James and John, she's the wife of Zebedee. The gospel of Luke mentions a lady named Johanna.

She was one of several women in the Bible healed of “evil spirits and diseases” by Jesus Christ (Luke 8:2). After being healed, Joanna accompanied Jesus and the disciples and helped support the Lord’s ministry. She was the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household estate.

They weren’t going to the tomb thinking, I know that Jesus is risen from the dead. They came to the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus is dead. They had forgotten that Jesus said He was going to rise on the third day. In fact, all of His followers forgot that. They didn't believe that. They saw Him beaten and crucified. They saw Him die, and they didn't think for a moment that He was going to come back to life.

An interesting side note is that it was the enemies of Christ who said, "We need to have a guard over the tomb. We need to roll a big stone over the tomb and put the seal of Rome on that stone and watch the tomb. Because the Pharisees said, "that deceiver (speaking of Jesus), said He was going to rise again on the third day. We don't want His disciples to steal the body and create an even bigger problem for us."

These women just knew that there was a big stone in front of the tomb that needed to be rolled away. They didn't go to the tomb thinking that He was risen. And so, when they get there and they see the angel, and they see the stone rolled away. That's why it says, "**Behold, wow,** can you believe this? He is not here. He is risen!"

- A. **The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact of history.** John MacArthur said: "The resurrection is the most indisputable fact in all of history."
- 1) For starters, **the tomb is EMPTY.** You can go to Jerusalem and look for the remains of Jesus; you're not going to find them anywhere. You can find His tomb, but it’s still EMPTY.
 - 2) **There were over 500 eyewitnesses** who said, "We saw Jesus resurrected. We touched Him. We felt Him. We heard Him speak. We saw the resurrected Christ." The disciples saw Him on numerous occasions after He rose from the dead. They ate with Him. He said, "Touch Me and see. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bone as you see that I have."

That's a big piece of evidence. If you go to a court of law and you have 500 eyewitnesses, I think you will make your case.

3) ***The Transformation of the disciples speaks to the fact of the resurrection.***

They're hiding behind closed doors. They're afraid that the Romans are going to arrest them. They crucified Jesus. What are they going to do to us?" They all deserted Jesus. Peter denied that he even knew Him three times. They're scared to death. But now are bold as a lion. They're preaching out in the open. They're saying that Jesus rose again from the dead.

They're willing to be imprisoned and even die for their faith in the fact that Jesus Christ is alive. "Who would die for a lie?" We ask that question.

Islamic terrorists got into the planes that flew into the World Trade Center, they believed the lie that if they killed infidels, they're going to get great rewards. But they died for a lie thinking it was the truth.

No one dies for a lie knowing it's a lie. You put the sword to Peter's throat, "Deny Christ and His resurrection or I'll cut your head off." If it's all a hoax, and he knows it's a hoax, maybe he changes his mind.

But Peter was crucified upside down because he wouldn't deny Christ.

Nathaniel – missionary to Armenia – beaten to death.

James the Lesser – preached in Palestine & Egypt – crucified in Egypt.

Andrew – preached in Greece & Asia Minor – crucified

Thomas – labored in India – martyred near Madras at Mt. St. Thomas.

James the brother of John – preached in Jerusalem & Judea – beheaded by Herod in Ad 44

Philip – died a martyrs' death at Heiropolis

Thaddaeus – preached in Assyria & Persia & was martyred.

Matthew – died a martyr's death in Ethiopia.

Simon the Zealot – crucified for his faith.

John the Beloved – Boiled in oil, exiled to Isle of Patmos, received the Revelation, only one to die a “natural” death.

They all knew that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The resurrection is a fact of history.

B. The resurrection is proof of Jesus' deity. It validates everything He said and did. It showed the world that He, indeed, was and is God.

When Jesus came at the beginning of His public ministry to the Passover feast in John, chapter 2, He sees how they're selling sheep and oxen and exchanging money in the temple, in the courtyard of the temple, and He gets angry. He gets a whip, and He begins to drive out the money changers. He flips over their tables, and He pours out their money, and He lets the lambs go; in the NIV, He says, ***"Stop making My Father's house a market."***

John chapter 2, verse 18-22: " ***The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." 20They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."*** (NIV)

He was speaking of the temple of His body. You could say to somebody, "Hey, destroy my body and in three days I'll raise it up again." But you can't do that; the only one that can do that is God. And His resurrection proves that He is God. Jesus Christ is really who He claims to be. He is God in the flesh.

Buddha's dead! Confucius is dead! Mohammad is dead! Let me tell you a little secret. Jesus Christ is alive forevermore! It's proof of His deity. And it's the cornerstone of Christianity.

Some people say He didn't have to really rise bodily from the grave in order to be our Savior." Yeah, He did! He can't save you if He's dead.

What good is a dead Savior? Paul says in 1st Corinthians chapter 15, verse 17:
"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

Good Friday, where Jesus died on the cross, is Good News only because of resurrection Sunday. Those two things go together. If Jesus had died on the cross and stayed dead, He can't save you. But He didn't stay dead. He rose again on the third day. And He appeared to John on the Island of Patmos, the resurrected Christ, and He said, ***"Behold, I was dead and now I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hell."***

If He didn't rise from the dead, then I need to change my sermon and just tell you to: **Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die.** But if He did rise from the dead, nothing else really matters except surrendering your life to Jesus.

So let this rock your world: Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Truth number 2 that can rock your world – You Can be Forgiven!

If we believe the truth that Jesus is risen - what are the ramifications of that? Well, one of the biggest implications is the fact that you can be forgiven.

Look what the resurrected Jesus said, as He met the disciples in Luke chapter 24: 46-47: ***"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*** (NIV)

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The resurrection is all about the fact that your sins can be forgiven.

The word forgiveness here is a legal term. It means "dismissed." It means "pardoned." It means "to give release." It's as if you are the defendant, and you stand before the judge, and the judge says, "You were guilty, but it's paid in full. You are pardoned. You are released. This case is dismissed." Wow! And that's what happens because of the Resurrection. Good Friday coupled with Easter Sunday creates forgiveness for you and me.

Maybe you're here today and you think, and you think, 'I wish that could be true for me.' But Pastor, you have no idea the terrible things I've done in my life. God can't forgive me for all that. I wish God could forgive me, but I'm beyond redemption. Listen. You write this down: An old song says, **"The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives."**

You read every single gospel account that tells of the resurrection, and you'll find the name Mary Magdalene. She was the last to leave the cross of Jesus and was one of the first to come to the tomb, along with those other women.

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene according to the gospel of John. You say, "Well, she must have been some kind of special, godly pure woman." Not exactly. In Luke chapter 8 it says: ***"And the twelve were with Him and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses; Mary, who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out."***

Seven is the number of completeness in the Bible. And it speaks here of the fact that Mary Magdalene was completely demon-possessed before she met Jesus Christ. Think about all the evil that a person who is completely demon-possessed would participate in.

You're not worse than Mary Magdalene. You can't hold a candle to Mary Magdalene and her sins. And Jesus forgave her.

I love what it says in Luke 7 when that woman weeps at Jesus' feet, whether it's Mary Magdalene or some other immoral woman. But He says to her, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. You don't have to walk around carrying a big load of guilt and shame, because your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." Wow!

The worst of sinners and everybody in between, can be made pure.

Oh, but then you say, "Well, I understand about and I believe that, but I'm a Christian, and have turned my back on God. I was close to Him at one time, but I'm not close to Him anymore. What is there for me?"

How about Mark chapter 16, verse 7, where the angel says, "***But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.***"

At the Last Supper Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death." And Jesus said to him, "Peter, before the cock crows twice you will deny three times that you even know Me." "Oh no, Jesus, that'll never happen." **And you know the story.**

In the Lord's hour of need, Peter turned his back on the Lord Jesus Christ. And maybe you've done that. And you say, "There's no hope for me. Stick a fork in me. I'm done. God will not take me back."

Did you hear what I just read, "Go, tell His disciples **and Peter...**" Those two words, "...and Peter..." That means you.

And Peter turned back to the Lord, and the Lord restored him. And Peter preached in Acts 3:19 saying, "***Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.***" (NIV)

Wouldn't you love to receive a time of refreshing from the Lord today? For many people, that's what you need.

Let this rock your world: No matter what you've done, you can be forgiven and restored to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Truth number 3 that can rock your world – You Can be Changed!

It's wonderful to be forgiven, but the message of the earthquake of Easter is: Not only can you be forgiven, but you can be changed. Mary Magdalene was changed. She was a brand-new creation in Jesus Christ. The one who had seven demons, changed!

Does anyone remember a woman by the name of Karla Faye Tucker? She was executed in Texas in 1998 for killing a defenseless woman in 1983 in her bed. She had grabbed a pickax, and she killed the woman who was lying in bed as she hit her repeatedly until the woman just turned to mush. She bragged about the killing, and she said it was such a thrill.

She went to prison and was put on Death Row and began to read the Bible. As she read the Bible, she saw her need for Jesus, and she cried out for mercy. And she asked Christ to come into her life. And the Lord came in and forgave her and changed her.

There was a movie made about the change in her life. He did that to Mary Magdalene, Jesus did it for Peter and for millions since His resurrection.

Now what can be changed in you?

First of all, you can live without fear. Isn't it interesting that the mighty angel that came down rolled away the stone.

He didn't roll away the stone so Jesus could get out. Jesus was already out. He rolled away the stone so people could come in and see EMPTY tomb.

The mighty Roman soldiers shook for fear of him and fell as a dead man. And the first thing he says to the women, "Don't be afraid." And then they see Jesus. And what does Jesus say to them? "Don't be afraid."

Now it's terrifying to see an angel. And it was terrifying, to see the resurrected Christ. This says to me that in the most terrifying of situations of life, you don't need to be afraid.

Some of you are facing some serious situations. Some of you are facing surgery. Some of you are facing cancer. Some of you are facing financial ruin or marital collapse or whatever it is, and you're afraid. Listen. We live in a world today that is like a house of cards. At any moment, it can just collapse. But the Lord says, "Don't be afraid. You keep your eyes on Me. Don't be afraid."

Psalms 23, verse 4 says, ***"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid because You're with me. You're with me, Lord. You never leave me. You never forsake me. And Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."***

Isaiah 26:3 says, ***"And You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*** You can live without fear.

Secondly, you can live with great purpose. Verse 7. He says, ***"Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has been risen, that He has risen from the dead."***

When the Lord invades your life and rocks your world, man, He brings purpose. He takes away fear and brings purpose. You have something great to share.

Just think how you would live your life today, if you had the cure for cancer. You'd be a celebrity at Duke, Wake Med, Greenville, and UNC.

Everyone in this world is born with spiritual cancer. It's called sin. And if it is left untreated, it will kill and send you to hell forever. The cure for the spiritual cancer is Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead.

The angel said, ***"Come and see,"*** AND ***"and quickly go and tell,"*** because you have what people need: the message that Jesus Christ rose from grave, that He really can forgive your sins, that He really can change your life.

Whether people accept it or not, it doesn't change the fact that you have the message to share. And it gives you purpose. That's why you're here.

You can live with great purpose. And you can live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said this in John chapter 16: ***"But I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you."***

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. That thick, heavy veil, 60' high, 30' across, was as thick as a man's hand was torn. And the Holy of Holies was opened. And God says, "I don't dwell in a temple made by men anymore. I dwell in hearts, and I want to dwell in your heart. ***"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God, and you are not your own."*** You can be forgiven, you can be changed, you can live with purpose in the power of the Holy Spirit if you let the earthquake of Easter rock your world.