**THE RESURRECTION OF THE KING**

April 21, 2019

Matthew 27:57-28:20

Key Verse 28:6 “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”

Jesus’ resurrection is the key event in God’s salvation work. We hear about it every year. However, it is not easy to understand its significance. Romans 8:11 says, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.” When we believe in Jesus’ resurrection, we are raised with Christ, and we become alive in Christ. A dead body cannot repair itself after getting hurt. But a live body can repair itself. After we stumble, life inside us repairs us and makes us whole. But those who do not believe in Jesus’ resurrection are dead. They do not have life in themselves, and they cannot repair themselves after stumble. Let’s think about the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection, and his commission to all of us, “Go and make disciples of all nations.”

**First**, the meaning of Jesus’ burial (27:57-61). As a crucified criminal, it was expected that Jesus’ body would be thrown to the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) and burned. However, through the intervention of Joseph, Jesus’ body was put into a rich man’s tomb and perfectly preserved for his resurrection. Centuries before Jesus’ death, Isaiah had prophesied about the Messiah: “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death…” (Isa 53:9). God made a perfect plan to preserve Jesus’ body; he fulfilled his plan through Joseph. Joseph had been a secret disciple of Jesus because of his fear. But, when he saw that Jesus died on the cross, something happened in his heart. His fear was gone. He boldly and courageously went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body, and Pilate gave it to him (58). Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of rock. He was not afraid of losing everything. In a real sense, Joseph buried himself economically, socially and religiously when he buried Jesus.

**Second**, the truth of Jesus’ resurrection (27:62-28:15). Matthew places the telling of Jesus’ resurrection in between two accounts about the religious leaders, who try to suppress the truth with lies. They hatch one deceptive plot before his resurrection and another after. The day after Jesus’ burial was the Sabbath. The chief priests and Pharisees should have prepared wonderful Bible messages for God’s people. However, they were haunted by Jesus’ words that he would rise again. So they went to Pilate and persuaded him to seal Jesus’ tomb so that no one could go in or out (62b-64). Pilate made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting guards (65-66). This made it very difficult for anyone to steal Jesus’ body.

In contrast to the religious leaders, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary kept the Sabbath sincerely. Then on the first day of the week, the third day since Jesus died, they went to look at the tomb (28:1). Before they arrived, there was a violent earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven! He rolled the stone away from the grave and sat on it (2). His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. This highlights the pure, brilliant, and glorious nature of Jesus’ resurrection. The Roman guards shook and became like dead men. They were powerless. The seal and the guards could not keep Jesus in the grave. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay” (5-6). The angel’s main point is that Jesus, who was crucified, had risen from the dead. Wicked people had condemned and crucified innocent Jesus. He seemed to have been a helpless victim of terrible injustice. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death (Ac 2:24). He has risen! The angel reminded them that it happened, “just as he said.” Jesus foretold his suffering, death and resurrection five times in Matthew’s gospel (16:21; 17:9,23; 20:19; 21:42). In fact, Jesus foretold these events so many times that the religious leaders remembered his words. In truth, Jesus’ prophecy was based on the Scriptures (Lk 24:44,46). Jesus’ resurrection was not a random event. It was God’s will, plan and purpose. Jesus wants us to believe in him based on God’s words in the Bible. We should pay close attention to God’s words to experience the Risen Jesus. Especially in times of trial and struggle, we should remember what Jesus said.

After telling the good news that Jesus had risen, the angel told the women, “…go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you” (7). The angel commissioned the women as the first resurrection witnesses and sent them to Jesus’ disciples. The disciples were desperate; they were anxious and fearful; they were directionless and even ran away. It was because they were under the power of death. Jesus really wanted them to hear the good news. The women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples (8). The fact that the women were still afraid means that the angel’s message was not fully persuasive. The angel was a heavenly messenger, but the women needed something more. Suddenly the Risen Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said with a big smile and great joy (9a). His word “Greetings” means more than “hello;” it means, “Be glad! Be happy! Rejoice!” Upon hearing his voice true and complete joy filled their souls. They came to Jesus, clasped his feet and worshiped him (9b). Indeed, Jesus is worthy of worship. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (10). Though the disciples had abandoned him during his passion, Jesus was not sorry, nor begrudging. Rather, Jesus regarded them as brothers, and really wanted to see them. Jesus loved them dearly, forgave all their sins, and made them children of God—his family members. Hence Jesus became their big brother. Jesus’ love is unconditional and unfathomable.

In contrast to the pure and truthful women, the religious leaders refused to believe Jesus’ resurrection and instead conspired to produce “fake news.” They paid the Roman guards a large sum of money and told them to say that Jesus’ disciples had come during the night and taken his body away (11-13). They also persuaded Pilate to participate in their conspiracy (14-15). They tried to suppress the truth for their own selfish purpose. This should not surprise us. Evil men still boldly lie to suppress the truth about Jesus’ resurrection. In fact, their story does not make sense at all. If they were sleeping, how would they know that the disciples stole the body. Also sleeping on duty was punishable by death. So they are incriminating themselves.

By placing the resurrection account between the two fabricated lies of the religious leaders, Matthew emphasized that Jesus’ resurrection is true; it is a factual event that happened. Since it is the truth, it is self-evident. It is not a fable or myth or legend; it is the truth. It does not change according to situations or circumstances; it is the truth. It does not become “out of date”; it is the truth. This truth is a firm foundation that we can build our lives on. This truth always gives life to our souls. What are the implications of this truth to us today? Firstly, the resurrection validates that the Bible is trustworthy, that it is true. The resurrection affirms that Jesus is the Son of God. Romans 1:4 says, “he was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.” It was the resurrection that authenticated his divine nature.

Secondly, Jesus’ resurrection confirms that he died for our sins. We believe that Jesus died for our sins in our place. How can we be sure that this is valid? If Jesus had not been raised, our faith would be futile—we would still be in our sins (1Co 15:17). But Jesus’ resurrection proves that God accepted his sacrifice once and for all to atone for our sins. Our sins are forgiven: past, present and future. Jesus’ blood cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God (Heb 9:14). Jesus’ resurrection is our assurance of victory over the power of sin.

Thirdly, Jesus’ resurrection gives us eternal life and living hope in the kingdom of God. Jesus’ resurrection is the firstfruit of all who believe (1Co 15:20). When we believe in Jesus we cross over from death to life (Jn 5:24). Eternal life begins the moment we believe in Jesus. But we still have the limitations of flesh in our human body. We are vulnerable to temptation and we fail from time to time due to our weaknesses. Because of this, we groan inwardly (Ro 8:23). But we have a living hope! The Risen Jesus has the power to transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body (Php 3:21). Our sinful nature will vanish, and we will share the character and attributes of our Lord Jesus. We will all genuinely be as humble, loving, holy and wise as our Lord Jesus. Our bodies will no longer be subject to disease or weakness. Many of us are suffering from various weaknesses of flesh, either constant headache, anxiety, or mental illness. But Jesus’ resurrection gives us hope that one day we shall be like him. 1 Corinthians 15:49 says, “And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”

In the meantime, when we believe in Jesus, we are united with him now in his death and resurrection. Jesus’ death is our death; Jesus’ resurrection is our resurrection. The Risen Jesus is alive and dwells in us in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to overcome all kinds of weaknesses, temptations, limits and hardships to live dynamic and powerful lives. Because of the life within us, even if we fall, we can get back up. Even if we stumble and fail, the life within us heals us and make us whole. There is always the second chance in the Risen Jesus.

**Third**, Jesus’ Great Commission (28:16-20). Look at verses 18-20. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” The Risen Jesus is the Lord of the universe. He has authority over politics and government; he has authority over all armies and military might; he has authority over all natural phenomena - all weather and floods and earthquakes and tornadoes and hurricanes; he has authority over our lives - health and disease and success and failure and life and death. The Risen Jesus uses his authority not to get revenge on his enemies, but to save all sinners. He desires that all people of all nations may come to him. Zechariah 2:11 says, “Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you.” 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 also says, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” The Risen Jesus wants the whole world to be saved. He entrusted the mission to us as his ambassadors on earth. We do it through the authority of the Risen Jesus.

Look at verse 19a again. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” This is Jesus’ command to us while living in the current phase of the kingdom between Jesus’ resurrection and his second coming. The main verb in Greek, which is active imperative, is “make disciples.” The verb “go” is a passive participle, and so we can translate it as “Make disciples of all nations it as you are going.” This means that wherever we go, we are to make disciples of Jesus. Making disciples is not an option, but an imperative for Jesus’ people. This also clarifies the mission of the church. Some say that the purpose of the church is fellowship. That the church is a place to make friends with godly people who strengthen your life. It is a place to provide activity for the family, enjoyable activity, meaningful activity. It is a place to serve the needy such as the homeless and refugees. Some say that the mission of the church is teaching, that the primary objective of the church is to instruct children and young people in obedience to God’s law, and bring them to maturity in Christ. Others say that the real purpose of the church is to give praise to God. That the church is really a praising community, a community of people who exalt God for who he is and what he has done.

Fellowship, teaching, praise are certainly all important, but they are not the mission of the church. They are part of the preparation and the training for the mission. Our mission is to make disciples...to bring people to Christ...to cause people to become followers of the Savior...to seek and to save those that are lost. We can think of Jesus’ commission in two ways. Firstly, C.S. Lewis compared it to recruiting resistance members in the enemy territory. In World War II, there were many French resistance members under Nazi rule. We are living in this world of sin and we are commissioned to expand his kingdom by recruiting others to join in. Then when Jesus comes again, we will welcome him and join in great victory celebration. Secondly, it is like giving new birth and raising them. There should be many sounds of new birth in the church. When there is no sound of newborn babies, the church is dying, and there is no hope for the church. Childbirth and raising children are very difficult and messy. Likewise, there will be a lot of troubles in giving new birth and raising new disciples. The church is a place for many growing pains.

It is not easy to make disciples of all nations. But Jesus promised: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (20b). As we carry out Jesus’ glorious commission, we will experience his love, grace, wisdom and power. Let’s hold in our hearts the good news, “He has risen.” And let’s carry out Jesus’ Great Commission with resurrection faith.