

Matthew 28:1-15 | David Vinyard

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Preacher: David Vinyard

[0:00] Let's see if this thing's working. Can you guys hear me? Gotcha. Perfect. Teddy's joke was spot on. The last time I came up here! to follow a ministry update, I think I had seven minutes Good to be here. I actually am...

About 48 hours ago, I rolled my ankle pretty well. If you could see the left side, I've got the little brace on it. And I didn't think I was going to be able to stand. So I was like, of course, of all the Sundays, I'm going to be up here seated, which I don't know if anybody's done, you know, like Professor X style up here, rolling.

But anyway, I'm glad to be standing here before you, was the comment I wanted to make. And I'm excited. I actually, when Cynthia was the one speaking and concerned about talking too fast, I was very grateful. I was like, yes.

One, I like fast talkers. Two, that saves plenty of time for what's coming. So I was... Actually, an answer to prayer the moment I sat down. So, thank God for you. Okay, so here we are. We're kicking off the very last, the very ending part of Matthew today.

Following Pinecrest, we had a message from Jeff, we had a message from Dave, as we've seen Jesus go from the garden. He's betrayed by his closest friends. He's wrongfully accused. He stands before Pilate.

[1:33] He goes through all these circumstances that we're familiar with. He's tortured. He's abused verbally, physically, but he remains faithful to his witness and faithful to prophecy. Even being nailed to a cross between criminals.

And Dave's pointed out two weeks ago, which I always appreciate, that he wasn't killed as a victim. He gave up his life. He willfully let it go. So that he might take it up again.

And last week, Jeff described the encounter, how Jesus became buried and what took place there, and in a new tomb, in a rich man's tomb. And so that's where we pick it up today in Matthew chapter 28, starting in verse 1, and we'll go all the way through 15.

So this is the day after the Sabbath, at the tomb, where Jesus takes his life back from the grave. It's kind of an interesting phrase when you say it by itself. He takes his life back. Something we celebrate at Easter, something of a bit of a unique claim to Christianity.

And as we'll find out here as we read, there's many that say it's impossible. There's many that say it just can't happen. It's a hoax. It's a fabricated story. It's something that just, it's too much to believe.

[2:41] And so ultimately, that is the miraculous resurrection of Jesus being the pinnacle of our faith. So, before we kick off and read the text, I found a couple quotes from a couple gentlemen who are more well-known than myself.

And I liked it because it has to do with the resurrection. So I'll read this first one from Henry Morris if you want to... Oh, you know what? They gave me the power. I forgot about that. Thank you. Henry Morris said, This bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity. If the resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and Christian faith is absolute truth. Thinking about the importance of what we're going to read about today.

Charles Spurgeon said, The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best attested facts on record. There were so many witnesses to behold it. And so we cannot and we dare not doubt that he did in fact rise from the grave.

With that, let's pray and we'll read our text today. God, thank you for this morning. Thank you for this life. Thank you for your word as it's preserved for us to study and learn and remember what you did and the great lengths you went to.

[3:55] And we're going to pray for us to not just to save us but to prove yourself and to demonstrate not only that you are God but that you have a power and a capability and a plan that is so much higher than anything we can do and understand.

So we thank you for that. We thank you for today and just ask that you would speak through me with whatever minutes I have remaining and just that this would be a blessing to the group. In Jesus name, amen. Amen. I know that's a little small, probably better off reading it on your own phone but I put it up here in case.

Let's go ahead and read Matthew 28. It says, 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.

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. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow.

And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you come seeking Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen.

[4:59] And he said, Come see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell the 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. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

And then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. Here's the second half. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell people his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were sleeping.

And if this comes to the governor's ear, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

[6:01] All right. So I know that's a lot of text. I know that's a lot to read through. But if you notice, we see these two encounters, first with the women at the tomb. And the second is this response from the guards and the chief priests and the elders, if you notice that.

And it's interesting because they both hear of or see or witness the same exact event. They both, they're the first to know in a way. And we see these different reactions. So we might compare those two as we're studying today.

But if you look at first at the account of the two women, the first thing you probably notice there is Matthew records for us a timestamp or just taking note of when.

When does all this take place? And the answer in verse one is at dawn of the very first day after the Sabbath. It's not an extremely significant detail, but it is a little significant.

Considering the Jewish culture, considering what they do on the Sabbath, consider what happens in their society, it essentially shuts down. Right? So, really this is reading like as soon as it was legal, as soon as it was permissible, like the moment they could have gone, they went.

[7:08] John chapter 20 says, while it was still dark, they came. So, nothing else mattered. No other weekly duties, no other getting off to a fast start. This is, they went right to see Jesus' dead body.

Which is helpful when you're thinking about the authenticity of this account or how or what might have happened at the tomb. Maybe they remembered Matthew 16 where Jesus did tell them that he must go and suffer many things and be killed but be raised on the third day.

Maybe that was in the back of their mind somewhere. Perhaps. I think by most accounts it's assumed Luke 24 says that they came to the tomb bringing spices which they had prepared. So, for the most part I think it's understood they were going to finish the process they started beforehand but ran out of time because of the Sabbath. But I do think it's helpful because if you're trying to poke holes in the story, if you're trying to come up with other ideas, if you're spreading schemes about Jesus' empty tomb, if there was a big lag in between when people could have visited or done things, it would have been, you know, that may have been an occasion for doubt. But here we see that Matthew records these women straight there. Straight there as soon as anybody could go there in this culture and society. So, the likelihood of someone out meddling since we're in the month of October and Scooby-Doo was a favorite of mine.

[8:29] Meddling kids. Not the leaders, not the priests, nobody's hanging out. Nobody's hanging out. These women were the first, the most diligent to get there and arrive. So, probably expecting to see the guard, probably expecting to get right to the rest of their burial process.

They had all this material, they were going to use the spices and that sort of thing to serve their loved one. But by verse 2, we read that an earthquake shook the area and that the angel rolled back the stone.

So, whatever their expectation was, I don't know if they saw that one coming. Mark, Luke and John omit the earthquake, but they do confirm the angel and the stone being rolled aside.

So, very similar accounts all the way through. If you noticed, the angel in verse 3 is described as having a countenance like lightning. I kind of thought about that for a minute, you know, what that might have looked like.

I mean, we live in the age of CGI and all of the animation you can, so we kind of have a better idea than maybe what others would have. But still something, enough of a shock that these guards passed out.

[9:37] Done. It's kind of a crazy scene to descend upon if you're these women at, you know, 4 a.m. or whatever time they got there. Luke describes the women as perplexed.

Mark says that they were alarmed and John simply says they left very quickly to tell the others. But all of these accounts, they're all complimentary. As you're looking at this, what happened at the empty tomb of Jesus across all of the Gospels, not one detail to the notion that things had been tampered with.

Or that someone had been, you know, chipping away at the stone or, you know, needling at the guards or any of that. There's no interference. There's no maybe this happened. Rather, each detail points to this miraculous occurrence, this sudden happening, this supernatural encounter with what they thought was a done deal.

And in all four Gospels, we see very plainly a messenger waiting in an empty tomb. That is definitive. Which is exactly as Jesus foretold, exactly as the prophets described, exactly what the Jewish leaders feared, and exactly what the Romans were hoping to avoid.

Isn't that kind of funny? So that's a key feature. That's just thinking about the setting, thinking about the context of what these ladies descended upon. So with the grave empty, the stone rolled away, and this lightning character hanging out, Matthew records the angel saying three things as the women approached, if you notice.

[11:02] Looking back around verse five. He says, do not be afraid. He says, Jesus has been raised up. In Luke 24 of the same story, it says, and then they remembered his words.

So almost like, do not be afraid and believe what I'm about to tell you. You know, and there's like an inferred trust me on this. And then the third thing was go tell the others.

So don't be afraid, believe, and go tell the others. It's kind of a simple pattern for us, you know, a noteworthy consideration. Because I think perhaps each of us has at some point in our life, and before friends and family, the opportunity to consider the empty grave of Christ.

And what does that mean for us? Is it a place of fear? Is there an encounter to believe? And is it something we believe firmly enough and are confident in enough to tell others, right?

I love that God allowed Mary and Mary to witness the finished work of Christ as first, as immediate encounters, and to preserve that for us.

[12:10] Almost, not that we needed it from other scripture, but almost just to really slam the label down to say, you know what? Jesus was truly God. He is who he said he was. He did take his life back up.

That grave is empty. And that sacrifice that he laid down for the sin of the world? It's done. It's good. It's in. It's booked. What a neat picture there at the empty tomb, right?

Acts 24. Oh, this was the one I was supposed to show you before. So there's the angel speaking. Sorry about that. It's better when they do it and not me. Acts 24 says, But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

So I think the challenge here is just, for those who believe, just to remember that. For those that don't, don't leave here today in unbelief. Don't leave here today in fear or doubt or any bit of missing that consideration.

All right. Let's keep on cruising down this line. So if you think about that setting, the women landing, you think about what happens next.

[13:24] You look how they respond in verse 8. It's a reasonable reaction. Despite the angel's best efforts, it says they respond with fear and great joy.

So they are a little bit afraid. Or maybe just like an amazement, right? The angel said, Don't be afraid, but it's kind of hard not to be when you're just encountering and witnessing all of this stuff. And as a parent, I always relate to things like that.

You know, where it's like you say one thing and immediately the person in front of you does that thing. You know, it's kind of common. But what a unique pairing of emotions, though, if you caught that. If you look at verse 8, it says they were, they had fear and great joy.

I think Mark says the expression is trembling and yet amazed. It's kind of an interesting, interesting pairing, right? Interesting, an odd couple. I try to think of the last time I felt both fear and great joy. My son Isaac stayed up here. I'm going to tell a story about you, buddy. You okay with that? This past summer, I went to New York City for a business trip. And my family came up to visit middle of the week and spent some time in the city and just got around.

[14:31] It was a good trip other than most of the rain. But one thing we did while we were there is we went to this new building. And it's called The Edge. I have a few pictures of this. But basically on the west side of Midtown, you go up a hundred stories in the air.

Twelve hundred feet. And you're standing on this observation deck that is made completely of glass. So it's a, yeah, there we go.

So all glass rails, all floor panels. You look out and you can see the city. You look down and you see nothing. I mean, you see the glass but then you just see it. It's just a weird phenomenon, right? And you just, you can't help but get a little woozy because there's no perspective. You're just like, you know, you're thinking about that. So this feeling of fear and great joy is kind of an interesting happenstance.

And so here's the real story. I was joking with Isaac. Most of you know my two sons. My son is a lot like me here sitting in the front in the third, fourth row.

[15:38] A little more fear than the rest of us, right? A little more nervousness than maybe his brother. A little freaky walking out there. So he had the fear side covered and maybe a little bit of joy.

My other son, Benjamin, upon seeing Isaac's fear, began jumping towards the glass and stomping on the panels that we were all standing on. You know, making sport of it all.

And so in that moment I just think of like that is the perfect picture of fear and great joy all together in one, like the Vineyard family getting through that photo op. But anyway, in that moment I just thought about fear.

Trembling and yet amazed. I thought was a good way to think about that. And maybe in a more meaningful way, that's how we're told these witnesses are at the empty grave. Something along those lines.

And perhaps it's a stretch, but I think maybe that's something for us to consider, right? Not that we would walk around in fear, not that we would be nervous, not that we would be trembling. But rather that we would just be continually taken back by the gospel of Christ.

[16:46] Taken back by the empty grave. Taken back by what the Savior did for us. Almost as if we witness it like those women as they were approaching the tomb. You know, because we do, we live as strangers and aliens in this world, right?

The Bible says in a sinful world. And yet we are believers of this miracle. We are understanders of this truth. And I think for myself, sometimes it just becomes familiar. Sometimes it just becomes something that I'm used to.

And maybe that's good. But other times I think maybe it should be a little more impactful. Maybe it should be a little more tangible and relevant to my day, right?

Because I know that empty grave represents the reality that a sinner like me can be forgiven. That a lost soul can be transitioned into a son of God.

I mean, these are things that don't make any sense outside of the grave. So anyway, just a challenge for yourself as I challenge me. Maybe a healthy awe, a healthy fear mixed with great joys.

[17:51] That might be something we should carry around a little more often. I like this verse from 1 Peter. Live as people who are free. Not using freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, and fear God. Just kind of a concise wrap on that. And hopefully that's something that describes us today. My favorite part of this text, as familiar as it might be, is honestly what happens next.

So if you look at verse 9, I picture these ladies, like, they're collecting themselves, they're coming together, like, alright, alright, let's do this. You know, they set off, probably still doing a couple hard blinks.

You know, the lightning guy. It takes a little while to unsee that. But, they make their way out. And they journey across town to tell the other believers. And it says, suddenly in their midst, we see Jesus miraculously appear.

He just, he's there. And he says, rejoice. And they fell at his feet and worshiped. And it's just this neat picture. They, they leave in fear and joy.

[19:01] And he descends on them and says, just rejoice. You know, it's this reminder that our Savior is never far from us. And even when we don't necessarily physically see him, right, he offers a calm for those fears that we might have.

For those concerns. Psalm 34, 4 says, I sought the Lord and he answered. And delivered me from my fears. And it's just this neat picture of these ladies, you know, they go out and Jesus just, it's just this, this beautiful picture of just arriving, comforting them, and then challenging and strengthening them all at once.

It's, it's really a cool thing. And he just says, rejoice. It reminds me of Paul's encouragement to Timothy, a very familiar verse in, in 2 Timothy 1, just talking about a spirit, not having a spirit of fear, but a spirit of boldness.

But this concept of being afraid or responding in fear or Jesus calming our fears, it's a little bit against the times in which we live. And I'll tell you why I say that.

I talked about this one day at Dayspring, but this world, I've just noticed the last couple years and maybe well beyond that, maybe it's just because I paid attention more the last couple years to this. But I feel like we live in a time where anxiety is almost normalized and sustained, right?

[20:22] It's, it's a constant state of being. And, and for sometimes great reasons and other times it's just more accepted. And I think the enemy wants to deal out fear like it's a deck of cards. Just, you get a fear, you know, everybody all over.

Um, and I get that and I, I relate to that. And I just think thinking about this picture of what happened at the, at the tomb and how they respond and what the angel says and what Jesus says.

It's just this reminder that we really don't, that's not for us, you know, as believers. I don't think we need to linger in that state for long. Um, if we remember the truth, if we understand who it is we serve and worship, um, it's not necessarily fitting of a believer in Christ.

And so I just was challenged by that, by this text and that the reminder that we have a savior who has overcome fear. He has overcome the grave. He's overcome death. And he has appeared again to encourage us to rejoice.

What a neat, what a neat picture, right? Um, I like Paul writes to the Romans here towards the end of that book. He says, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with the hope of the power of the Holy Spirit.

[21:41] Maybe that's new. Maybe you have read this text and you're overly familiar with all of that. And that's, that's great. I feel like I've read of the empty grave of Christ. I feel like I've heard of the guards passing out. I've heard of the angel.

But just this simple picture of these faithful ladies overcome with worship as Jesus just appears in their midst and calms their fears and challenges them to rejoice. It's just a really neat picture of the tomb that I was not very familiar with prior.

Okay. So that's the first encounter. That's the first witness of the empty grave. We're going to look at the second piece here. I got to stop walking to my left.

Um, lean this way. Just a quick comparison. Right? Because these were not the only folks that heard of Jesus. They're not the only folks that saw some of these things. Um, so let's read verse 11 again to the end real quick.

I don't think I have this up. No, I don't. Okay. That's my AI image. Not yet. We'll get there. Okay. Verse 11. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

[22:49] And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, tell people. His disciples came by night and stole him away. And if this comes to the ear of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.

So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. So there's, there's all the references of, I can't believe they would ever do this. This puts their own life in jeopardy if they were ever caught lying or if they admitted sleeping, right? They're done. Like it doesn't make any sense. The whole, the whole scheme is a terrible plan for those that accepted the money. So all of those things aside, I feel like this just represents a sad alternative to a saving faith in the resurrection of Christ.

It's, it's a failure to receive the truth. It's a prideful rejection of the empty grave. No, that can't be. That's impossible. We're not going to accept it. We're not going to allow it.

And comparing that, it's the almost the exact opposite as the women's response who were found believing and rejoicing. So here's my token AI image, as I've been doing lately.

[23:57] I don't know how long this will continue. This could be the last one that could, could go on for a while. I don't know. Um, it's pretty solid other than misunderstanding what it means to have the ear of the governor. I think somehow when I put the prompts in, I think it took it as a physical condition.

It's not, you know, maybe I have a little bit of the ear of the governor. I don't know. But it did pretty well. You know, it captured what that may have looked like.

But considering these men, these men were witnesses to the very words and miracles of Christ. And I mean, not just this one, right?

They questioned him intensely. They followed him around. I think that series, The Chosen, the bit that I've seen, like they just do such a good job showing these leaders and scribes and Pharisees, like they weren't hiding out.

They were all over this. They watched everything happen. They questioned, challenged left and right. They saw more in a few short years than we could ever read about in our text, right? For the most part, what we're understanding.

[25:04] And yet they still from, and just think about this in terms of our time living now, they still, after all that, from the first day of his resurrection, rejected the truth all the way through.

And I think, I was just thinking about those guys and their response and what that is. And I think it's just a reminder that this world has been perverting the truth of Christ since day one.

And for me not to be caught off guard by that, and for me to understand that there are many who will and will continue to reject the life that Christ has lived and offered.

And it's going to show up in our headlines, it's going to show up in our schools, it's going to show up in our communities, it's going to be a very real presence in everything that we do. Because it's been that way all along.

There are many who would disrespect the Son of God. There are many who reject the life that he offers. There are many who choose greed or reputation or temporal security over an understanding of the truth.

[26:11] And so we ought not to be surprised by it. We ought not to be caught off guard or discouraged or overly frustrated when the world worships anything but the Son of God.

When the world clings to everything but the empty grave. Does that make sense? As frustrating as that is, because I'm there, like, I'm like, no. How do you not see this? How do you miss this? How do you fail to recognize this?

But it's just the way that it is. And I found this last bit helpful. We are going to end early, by the way, so I'm happy about that, for your sakes. I think last time I did go over by like 20 minutes, right? It was a long haul.

But here's the last bit that I found helpful. I kind of accidentally stumbled upon these two verses in reference to everything else. Thinking about this response to the empty grave.

Thinking about that the world has many who will reject the truth. Paul urges the Ephesian church, and he gave them this charge in Ephesians 4.

[27:16] I think I have this one. Ephesians 4, 14 and 15 says, We will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of people and their deceitful scheming.

Sounds a little bit like, you know, these jokers, right? Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every way the mature body of him who is the head of Christ.

Who is the head, Christ. Let's see what Peter has to say. This is at the end of his second epistle in 2 Peter 3. He says, And also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.

Okay, so what did he say? In 16, As in all his epistles, speaking in them these things. In verse 17 and 18, Therefore, beloved, since you know this, beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.

Sounds like them again, right? I like this now that I'm getting used to it. But look what he says. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[28:32] So more than once, as the apostles are encouraging those who are living post-resurrection and thinking about how to navigate the error of the wicked, the schemes of the enemy, and the confusion of society.

He doesn't say, lean in and fight back. He doesn't say, you know, withdraw. He says, grow in maturity. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It's an interesting response to dealing with this sort of thing in the world around us. That word is, and I'm going to butcher this one because the actual pronunciation is weird, but it's auxano, I think is how it is spelled.

And it means to just expand, to increase, to augment. And so, in other words, we see the world coming. We see these things around us, the schemes of the lost and the wicked.

And we don't engage in futile banter. We don't go down a hateful path. It says, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Not standing still, not sitting down as I did most of the day yesterday.

[29:42] Not retreating, but by increasing in our own understanding and expanding towards maturity as the body of Christ. I just thought that was such a good way to wrap up this text and think about all the ways we could respond.

First, in belief. Second, dismissing our fears. And then being challenged to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. So, maybe there's something there for you.

Maybe it's all, maybe it's all recap. But the next time you think of Matthew 28 and the resurrection, I just, I would challenge you to consider these two groups. Because it was an interesting comparison. Think about the faithful ladies.

Think about their response. Think about the worship they had afterwards. And just the emptiness and the risk and the failure of the guys that came after that second part.

Both witnessing an empty grave. But one in awe and joy at the promises of Christ. Growing in the knowledge and grace of Christ. Receiving the truth with gladness. The other rejecting the miracle. [30:47] Fearing the ideas and the opinions of men. And just remaining in the state of dismissal. It's my hope for us and myself that we remain in that state of awe.

That we find that place of worship for these things. That it's always that special. That it always feels like something that is just amazing. Because it needs to be. So that's the hope.

Are we closing with a song? I can't remember. We are? Okay. If you guys want to come up. I missed your warning. I'll maybe just end with this thought.

I had a couple other. Yeah, we're good. You know, not fearing or being distracted by the schemes of men. Because they're always going to be there. I think that was the reality of this study.

They're always going to be there. They've been there from day one. But just remembering there is nothing more worthy of my awe. And my rejoicing. Than the finished work of Christ.

[31:48] And so I think we can remember that this morning. Let me pray. And we'll sing. God, thank you for today. Thank you for the chance to study your word. And just be challenged by our response to an empty grave.

Pray that you would help us to maintain our joy. That we would maintain our worship. That we would reject or dismiss. Or allow our fears to be calmed in trusting you.

And just as it's put into scripture for us, God. That we would grow. That we would grow in our maturity and understanding of the things of you. That we would grow in the places you have us.

And that that would be our response to the schemes and the wickedness that we do see from time to time around us. So we thank you for these things and we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.