

Introduction to Message Easter April 16, 2017

This year has been designated as year of Hope!

As we have been saying throughout this year, the greatest source of Hope is the Bible!!!!

The one greatest source of hope found in the Bible is the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Harold Willington writes in his 12 Essential Doctrines Book:

The resurrection of Christ is the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Declaration of Independence of the Christian faith. The sign of Christianity is really not the cross, but an empty tomb! If one denies the resurrection, he is forced to six horrible conclusions.

- All Gospel preaching has been, is now, and always will be, utterly and completely useless.
- All past, present, and future faith is futile
- All preachers become notorious liars
- All living Christians are still in their sins
- All departed Christians are in hell
- All reason and purpose for life itself is destroyed

The number 1 name for boys today in America is Noah. We live in a day when people need hope.

Resurrection Words to the Women Matthew 28:1-10

- 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."*

Shortly after the women encountered the angels in the tomb and bowed down on their faces to the ground, the angels spoke to the women (only one angel appears to have been doing the talking).

"The angel's words are a succession of short sentences... and break up the astounding revelation... into small pieces, which the women's bewildered minds can grasp" (Maclaren).

To study the words of the angel for the women who came to the tomb, we will note the word of comfort, the word of criticism, the word of clarification, the word of confirmation, and the word of commission.

1. The Word of Comfort

"And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified" (Matthew 28:5).

"And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted; Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified" (Mark 16:6). The angel's word of comfort was twofold. It calmed their worried and perplexed hearts and it was cognizance or awareness of their purpose.

Calmed Their Fearful, Worried And Perplexed Hearts

"Fear not" (Matthew 28:5).

"Be not alarmed" (Mark 16:6).

The women needed comfort and the angel met their need with the first words that he spoke. He assures them they need not fear that these angels were going to do them harm. In Old Testament times, to see an angel was thought to be a precursor of death. To see an angel was considered by them to see God, and to see God was death.

When Manoah (Samson's father) was given a message from an angel, he said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God" (Judges 13:22).

When Jacob wrestled with the angel before meeting Esau, He called the place where he wrestled "Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:30). Gideon confessed this fear when he had an encounter with an angel (Judges 6:22,23).

Awareness and Knowledge Of Their Purpose

"I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified"
(Matthew 28:5).

The angels informed the women that they knew the women's purpose in coming to the grave. That is a comforting thought to those who have not done evil. While the fact that God knows all can be very disturbing to the disobedient, it can also be very comforting to the devoted.

God knows why you come to church, why you read your Bible, why you pray, etc. Our motivation is important and God knows what our purpose and aims and goals are in our conduct. If they are holy, we have no reason to fear. If they are not holy, the angels will give no word of comfort.

Note that the angel identifies Jesus Christ as the One who "was crucified," (Matthew 28:5; Mark 16:6), and as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Mark 16:6).

In identifying Christ as being crucified, the angel gives a clear testimony that Jesus Christ did indeed die on the cross.

In testifying that Jesus was from Nazareth, the angel gives clear testimony as to the lowly home of Christ. Christ came to earth the first time in humility. He will come the second time in honor—great glory indeed! It was the cross before the crown, however.

And this order is the same order for us, too. It is humility before honor, testing before triumph, faithfulness in the lowly before promotion to a higher position, devotion before revelation, and obedience before reward.

2. A Word of Criticism or Word of Rebuke

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"
(Luke 24:5).

This question was a rebuke. The women are not being rebuked for their seeking of Christ. They are rebuked for where they sought Him.

Their seeking of Christ is to be commended. And the angel knew this good reason why they were coming to the tomb. What is rebuked here is their seeking Him at the tomb. If they had paid attention to the message of Christ which He gave earlier before the crucifixion, they would have known that He would not be in the tomb.

This rebuking question by the angel has wide application to people in every age. So many are seeking life in the dead things of the world. They go to dens of iniquities to find life but the dens of iniquities are only places of the dead and places that will deaden spiritually and often times physically, too. They try all sorts of worldly amusements and entertainments to find life, but those things will not give them real life either. Some go to apostate churches looking for life, but they will only find a dead theology and a church that is a gateway to death in hell not eternal life in heaven.

3. A Word of Clarification

"He is not here; for he is risen" (Matthew 28:6).
The women *"were much perplexed"* (Luke 24:4) when they *"found not the body of the Lord Jesus"* (Luke 24:3) in the tomb.

The angel clears up their puzzle and confusion about the missing body by telling them why there is no body in the tomb. Christ is risen, and is gone from the tomb.

This news about the risen Christ is the great announcement of Easter. Christ is alive, He has risen from the grave. Death could not hold Him. "It will not do to say that Jesus arose in spirit and appeared alive though his body remained in the tomb" (Robertson); for His body is not in the tomb.

This message of the angel has never been refuted. If the enemies of Christ had taken the body they would have shown it with glee to counter the resurrection claim. But they did not have the body, and His enemies never produced a body. The only explanation that makes sense about the empty tomb is the angel's message to the women, namely, Christ is risen. Any other message is fraud, bogus, deceitful, and wrong. Many churches today do not proclaim a resurrected body. Yet they celebrate Easter though they do not believe in the event that made Easter. They talk glibly about the

spirit of the resurrection but not about the bodily resurrection—but how can you have any "spirit" of it if it has not occurred? What muddled thinking indeed! These churches deny the obvious; they deny that which is abundantly proven. Churches of this sort need to be put out of business, for they only lead souls to hell.

4. A Word of Confirmation

The angel will give further support for the resurrection message, and this support is most important. **The two confirmations** of the resurrection that the angel gave the women was the saying of Christ and the sepulcher of Christ.

The Saying Of Christ.

Luke 24:5-8

5 And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,

7 that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

8 And they remembered his words,

The first confirmation of the angel's message was the words of Christ. To examine this area of

confirmation, we note the reassurance in His saying, the review of His saying, and the remembering of His saying.

First, The Reassurance In His Saying.

"Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,"

The angel's pointing to the saying of Christ as a confirmation of the resurrection emphasizes the place of the Word of God in our faith.

The saying of Christ was, of course, the Word of God. Nothing gives such support to our faith than the Word of God.

Peter emphasizes this fact in his first epistles. After writing about his own experiences in seeing the transfiguration, he makes the significant statement that says,

2 Peter 1:19

"We have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that you take heed"

What Peter is saying is that the Word of God ("sure word of prophecy") is a better support than Peter's own experience.

The Word of God is the great confirmer of our faith. There is, however, a de-emphasis upon the Word today in our churches. People want visions and other forms of confirmations and revelations. But the Word of God is the best.

Second, The Review Of His Saying.

A number of times Christ spoke of His resurrection.

At the very beginning of His ministry, He said, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"* (John 2:19).

That statement was made in Jerusalem. The angel's message made reference to what Christ had said in Galilee which these women heard.

Luke 9:22 is one of those Galilee sayings: *"The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."*

Another Galilee saying is in **Luke 18:31-33**: *"Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again."*

Christ made the prediction of the sign of Jonah in Galilee, too. *"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"* **Matthew 12:40**.

Scripture does not record everything which Christ did and said, so there may have been and doubtless were a number of other times when Christ was in Galilee that He spoke of His resurrection. Christ made it plain to His followers that He would rise from the grave after His crucifixion.

Third, the remembering of His saying.

"And they remembered his words" (**Luke 24:8**).

The angel's message revived the faulty memory of the women. These women's faulty memory was not a physical or biological problem but represents a spiritual problem.

Israel also had this faulty memory problem.

"They soon forgot his works" (**Psalms 106:13**).

"The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves" (**Judges 3:7**).

Samuel reminded Israel of this problem when he said,

"They forgot the LORD their God" (1 Samuel 12:9).

The Psalmist said, *"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"* (Psalm 9:17).

Moses exhorted Israel by saying, "*Beware lest thou forget the LORD*" (**Deuteronomy 6:12**).

Proverbs exhorts, "*My son, forget not my law*" (Proverbs 3:1),

The Psalmist testifies that in spite of difficulties, he did not forget the Word of God. "*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me; for I do not forget thy law*" (Psalm 119:153).

Poor spiritual memory breeds unbelief as these women and the disciples illustrate. Our need is often not more revelation but more remembering.

The peril of forgetting in the spiritual realm is why we need to attend church regularly, and it is why we need to read the Scripture regularly, and it is also why we need to hear the same sermons and lessons over and over again.

Some folk do not like repetition in Bible study of sermons, but athletes do a lot of repetitious acts at practice in order to train the body to function well in a game. We need to do the same spiritually so that we do not forget God's Word.

The Sepulcher Of Christ.

"He is not here; for he is risen... Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (**Matthew 28:6**).

"He is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid him" (**Mark 16:6**).

The second confirmation of the angel's message about Christ being risen is found in the sepulcher of Christ. The proof was in the grave clothes. We will note more about this proof in a later chapter when we will look at the discovery by Peter and John when they went into the tomb and looked where Christ had been laid. Though Christ was gone, the grave clothes remained. And their condition, that is, how they were laying in the place where Christ had laid, said volumes about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. So the angel had plenty of strong and solid proof about his message of the resurrection of Christ which he spoke to the women. The resurrection of Jesus Christ does not stand on flimsy ground. It stands on extremely solid ground. In fact, if the resurrection cannot be proven by the proof available, then nothing else can be proven. If resurrection evidences cannot be accepted, then we cannot accept evidences of anything else.

5. A Word of Commission

"Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him" (**Matthew 28:7**; cp. **Mark 16:7**).

Now that the women know the truth, they need to tell it. Revelation begets responsibility.

To examine this commission given the women, we note the manner in the commission, the men in the commission, and the message in the commission.

The Manner In The Commission.

"Go quickly" (Matthew 28:7). "Go your way" (Mark 16:7).

There are three aspects of this "manner" in which the women were to go. They have to do with command, calling, and celerity.

First, *command*. "Go your way" (Mark 16:7). This statement is in the imperative mood in the Greek—meaning it is a command. There is authority here, heavenly authority for the women's actions. This was not an option. Service is never an option. It is an obligation. If you fail to go, you will be disobeying. God always shows us our service as that which is an obligation to perform. Many folk in our church do not seem to evidence their acquaintance with this aspect of service. They treat it as optional. But service is obligatory.

Second, *calling*. "*Go your way*" (Mark 16:7). Don't pervert this statement as saying you can go the way you want to. It refers here to the way that is your calling. God has a calling for each of us. We

are to go that way, not some other way. The women's calling was to go to the disciples and tell about the risen Savior. Know your calling and then do it.

Third, *Celerity* "*Go quickly*" (Matthew 28:7).

We would not need this statement to know that the women needed to get on their heaven-commanded mission quickly and promptly. All service requires promptness. Dilatoriness is disobedience. When God gives you a task to perform, you are to begin immediately unless He says differently.

The Men In The Commission.

"Tell his disciples and Peter" (Mark 16:7).

Both Matthew and Mark report that the women were to tell the disciples. Mark adds that the angels especially mentioned Peter. So the angels' commission was to tell a specific group of men. When God calls you to His service, He will tell you where it is. And, He will give you a message to proclaim. Our call to service includes these details that we must respect or we do not fulfill our calling. To look further into this part of the commission, we note the disciples and the denier who were to be told.

First, *The Disciples*. Why did the disciples need to be told? The answer is they did not believe in the

resurrection. Though Christ had repeatedly told them about His crucifixion and resurrection, they did not listen well and believed only what they wanted to believe. The idea of Christ dying did not appeal to them so they denied that. But when He died, they could no longer deny it. They could, however, deny the resurrection message and they did. As we will learn later, when the disciples were told about the resurrection, the general reception of the news was not good. They did not believe what the women told them. And when the disciples told Thomas that Christ had appeared to them, he did not even believe his fellow disciples (John 20:25).

Second, The Denier. *"And Peter"* (Mark 16:7). Peter was especially singled out by the angels to be told the resurrection story. "We are not to infer, because the angel said, 'Tell his disciples and Peter,' that Peter was not still a disciple. The means is, 'Tell his disciples, and especially Peter'" (Barnes). Mark alone tells of the special instructions to tell Peter. What a thrill "and Peter" would send through Peter's heart. What reassurance it would give him that he was still one of Christ's disciples. The moroseness which gripped the hearts of the disciples during the time that Christ was in the grave was extremely great ("mourned and wept" of Mark 16:10 as an example). But of the eleven disciples, none would be as morose and discouraged as Peter. It was bad enough that the very One in Whom Peter and

the other disciples had put all their hopes in was now dead. But for Peter, the bitterness of the hour was greatly increased by the fact of his terrible denials of Christ on that awful night before the crucifixion. How he had shamed the One Who meant more than life to him. What a failure he had been. His talk had been big, brash, and bold early in the night; but later on he had wilted under pressure, became cowardly, and made those terrible three denials of His Master. So "And Peter" would be thrilling news for Peter.

"And Peter" should give great hope and encouragement to all who have miserably failed. It reminds us and reassures us that God *"delights in mercy"* (**Micah 7:18**) and is *"ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy"* (**Psalms 86:5**). None of us deserve anything from God and so Peter has nothing on us. We have all failed miserably. But a gracious Savior stands ready to forgive. Of course, this fact does not mean we are free to live as wickedly as we want. To use the grace of God as an excuse to enjoy the pleasures of sin is grossly perverted thinking. It ignores the fact that repentance is always involved in forgiveness. And true repentance looks at sin as something terrible and desires to be free from it and to not do it again. That Peter repented is without question. When Christ gave him that look after the third denial, the heart of Peter broke; and *"he went out, and wept bitterly"* (**Matthew 26:75**) which reflected a heart attitude of repentance.

The Message In The Commission

"Tell... he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him"

Matthew 28:7

The message had at least three parts to it. There was the resurrection part, the rendezvous part, and the reward part.

First, The Resurrection Part

"Tell... he is risen."

This is the most important part of the message. Without this part, the other parts of the message would be worthless and meaningless. It is always so with the resurrection message. On this truth hangs all our doctrine, all our hopes, and all our salvation. Remove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from our creed and our doctrine and our message, and everything falls apart. As Apostle Paul said, *"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Second, The Rendezvous or Meeting Part

"Tell... that he goes before you into Galilee."

Another part of the message the women gave the disciples involved the disciples having a meeting with Christ in Galilee.

The night before the crucifixion Christ first told the disciples about this meeting. *"But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee"* (Matthew 26:32).

That the disciples should be reminded of the meeting in Galilee would be an important confirmation that Christ actually had risen from the grave. Christ was careful to give the disciples a good deal of evidence of the resurrection.

As an example, in His first appearance to them as a group, He showed them His hands and side to prove that He Who stood before them was indeed the Christ Who had been crucified (John 20:20).

Announcing the meeting in Galilee would also give proof of the resurrection. Others would not know about Christ scheduling the meeting with the disciples. Only Christ and the disciples would know. Therefore, reminding the disciples of the meeting would be all that much more confirmation of the resurrection. This meeting did indeed take place, but not for several weeks.

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matthew 28:16). It was in this mountain meeting in Galilee that Christ gave them the great commission recorded in Matthew 28:16-20.

There is a good lesson here about service—if you want to be given a place of service in God's work, be obedient to Him.

The command to meet in Galilee had to be obeyed before they got the great commission. If you feel left out and uncertain as to your place of service for the Lord (and many do), your problem may very well be right here—you have not obeyed the Lord in smaller matters and that lack of obedience as kept you from His service.

Third, The Reward Part. *"There shall ye see him."*

This is the great reward for obedience. We have just noted that service resulted from obedience. Here we note **the great blessing of obedience is to see Jesus**. To the devoted soul, that is tremendous news.

If you are in love with someone and have not seen them for a while, what blessed anticipation it is to know that at some appointed place and time you will be reunited with your loved one. Believers are looking forward to seeing Jesus Christ. This is the great anticipation of the second coming of Jesus Christ. *"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ"* (**Titus 2:13**). This promised reward was the great motivation for the disciples to be in Galilee.