

DO NOT BE AFRAID

Matthew 28:1-15

Our passage today is about the resurrection. But I want to start by backing up just a bit. How did it come to this? How is it that the Son of God ended up dead in a cold borrowed tomb? Why did Jesus die?

He died because you and I have a problem. It's a universal problem that never goes away; a problem that no one will be able to evade. Our problem is sin and the result of sin is death because sin is rebellion against God. We've all sinned; all rebelled; all deserve death.

You see, sin is such a big problem that the only solution required God to send Jesus to come into our mess, to live as our representative and to die in our place. But He didn't just die. He died the death of a sinner. He was humiliated, beaten, nailed to a cross and died a slow death of suffocation-that's how serious our sin is. As nails were driven into His hands and feet; as he began to lose His life on the cross, the nail in His feet would become the central point of agony-the only way to push himself up was to press the weight of His body on the nail but being slumped over cut off His ability to breath.

Not only that, Jesus also experienced the pain and agony of being separated (1st time) from the Father. Jesus had our sin on His shoulders and the punishment was the wrath of God; separation. Jesus experienced the judgement that our sin deserved. It was a slow agonizing death. And at the end Jesus mustered every last bit of energy He had, pushed himself up and said "It is finished".

And He wasn't just talking about His life. He was talking about the old system of getting to know God which was to work really hard, sacrifice much and then God will love you-that's finished. Instead, the perfect Lamb of God, sacrificed on the cross for the sin of the world, satisfies the wrath of God that our sin deserves. See, the solution to the problem of sin and death is new life. But, **before you get to life you have to go through death.**

I want you to be aware that fear is going to be a primary theme in our passage today. 4/10 verses have the word fear in them. Fear is a normal response to death; it was a very real response to the death of Jesus. The news spread fast-Jesus was dead. The one who healed the leper, the blind; the one who had raised Lazarus from the dead couldn't save Himself. Fear filled Jerusalem and nobody knew what to do.

You see, fear paralyzes us. Fear stops us from moving forward. And when we stop and give into fear we stay right where we are/just the way we are. Fear is why some people don't move forward with Jesus. Fear is the reason that some of us haven't taken our first step with Jesus. But the resurrection deals a death blow to our fear so that we can move forward.

Now, this was no ordinary Sunday morning stroll. The 2 Mary's are heading to the tomb the 3rd day after Jesus death. There were Roman soldiers guarding the tomb because of fear-the Religious Leaders didn't want anything to happen. Then an angel blasts down, moves the stone and sits on it; when he does, it's like an earthquake...the ground shakes. If your idea of angels is a fluffy little gerber baby, floating and fluttering around, your wrong.

This is God sending His angel to proclaim that Jesus is alive! And as he sonic booms through the atmosphere the earth shakes. And he had the appearance of lightning. Lightning is beautiful, from a

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distance. But there's nothing friendly about lightning. Isn't that why we count? We want to know when should we start to get scared. And look what happens to the guards. The soldiers had all taken an oath before Caesar and the General-if they fell down on duty their life was demanded of them. Look what happens.

In verse 4-they pass out! The Mary's walk up to the tomb to find soldiers passed out, the stone rolled away, an angel sitting on the stone. And immediately the controversy begins because some of the soldiers on the ground and Jesus is gone.

When all of this happens, some of the soldiers, ran back to the CP to report what happened (vs. 11-15), "there was a loud sound, flash of light, earth shook, angel appear, stone rolled away, soldiers passed out...oh and Jesus is gone." So the RL have a meeting and then bribe the soldiers; gave them money, told them to spread a lie, promised to protect them from the general.

Jesus being gone wasn't a problem for the RL, that's what they wanted. They just didn't want the truth about Jesus to get out because that would validate everything about Him and it would be the end of life as they knew it.

The sadness in all this is that the RL still refuse to believe Jesus. Why didn't they believe now? Why didn't they look at the facts, the testimony of the soldiers and question their own conclusions and motives? Why not believe?

Fear. These guys were at the top. They had everything to lose. They were superstars, celebrities. They were rich; they had power; they were addicted to their own fame and they didn't want to give it up. If Jesus was to come down and do away with the old system, they would be out of a job and Jesus would be getting all the attention. It was fear that caused them to resist Jesus, even despise Him.

It would have been amazing if they had come around; said wow! we were wrong all along. We were blind and proud; we heard what happened at the tomb. We're so glad your alive! But that didn't happen because religious people tend to hold back because of fear. But so do irreligious people-like some who resist the first steps of faith for fear of the outcome. Heres why; here's how this works:

We try to control things because of what we think will happen if we don't. We try to control things because we're not sure what the outcome will be-which can be frightening. Control is rooted in fear. The more control you need in your life the more fear you have. Here's how this plays out:

- If I can't control my life the way I want it to look, I can't control the outcomes.
- If I can't control my outcomes, someone else is in control of my outcomes.
- If my outcomes are up to someone else, I'm not sure they will have my best interest in mind.

Here are 3 ways this can show up in our lives:

1. *We fear that if we give up control it won't produce our desired results.*

This is why some can be so paralyzed in their relationship with Jesus; because the reality is with Jesus we have to hand over control but we can be afraid that He's not going to have our best interest in

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mind...at least not as we define it. This was the first sin in the Garden of Eden. Satan came to Adam and Eve and said "if you take a bite of this fruit you'll be like God." Twisting the words of God, selling a lie-and they bought it.

Hm, maybe there's more than what God gave us; maybe we can be better than how God made us; maybe if we take matters into our own hands we'll be happier. Little did they know that they would never be more like God than the instant before they bit the fruit-with intimacy and relationship. And as we have struggled and toiled to recover that relationship with God we've done it full of fear-if I give myself over, relinquish control, what's going to happen?

2. *We fear that God is holding out on us.*

At the core of most spiritual and emotional control is the fear that someone is holding out on me. "If I give myself to Jesus completely; if I let Him lead me instead of me lead me, He might not have my best interest in mind. I'm not sure if I can fully trust Him." The question is, is Jesus good.

The gospel should help us answer that-why send Jesus to be humiliated, die, bear scars forever if it wasn't for good? But it was for good. What man intended for evil, God planned for good. Through Jesus millions of souls would be rescued from eternal death.

Scripture tells us that God always has our best in mind in a way that we can't even fully comprehend right now. This life isn't the end, you were created a spiritual being and when your body dies your soul will live on forever. This life is a flash in the pan, but the "good" that Jesus intends for your life here directly effects your life in eternity. It's possible to be temporarily happy here and eternally unhappy.

But if you want the kind of happiness, joy, peace, satisfaction that lasts forever-that can only be purchased by the blood of Jesus; His sacrifice on the cross for you.

3. *We're afraid of what we'll have to do.*

Sometimes we fear giving up control because we're afraid of what we'll have to do. We know that if we give up control and let Jesus start calling the shots He's going to ask some things of us. He might ask us to do things that we don't want to do which scares us.

Outside of Jesus, all control and change happens externally. Any change you decide you want to make, you have to make it happen. If you want to stop drinking, stop cheating, get in shape, stop looking at porn, save money-you have to muster the will power and manufacture the goods in order to try to change yourself. And we know, because we've all been there, that eventually it doesn't work because we're trying to change from the outside in. But you can't make you good because you're not good-that's the big problem, remember.

But with Jesus, change occurs from the inside out. Here what I mean: The way we give control to Jesus is through faith and repentance; we believe in Jesus and turn from our sin. When that happens, Jesus changes us; a new heart, new life, new desires, new hope. When Jesus calls us to change it's not a matter of will power, it's a matter of want power; we want to change and because we have the Holy Spirit we can change.

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This theme of fear & control and death & life go together. We are so afraid to die to certain things within us that we don't change. We go through life doing the same things over and over and getting the same results with no transformation. And we never will until we die because you have to through death to get new life.

We experience this principal all the time in life. If you want to get in shape, healthy you have to die to pizza and oreos. You have to die to the couch and potato chips. Stop eating bad and start exercising.

In relationships? In order to resolve conflict, you have to die to your own view, expectations, pride in order to preserve life in that relationship. It's called humility, and humility requires us to die to ourselves. That's why, when Paul talks about humility in Phil. 2, he uses Jesus willingness to suffer and die on the cross as an example. You have to go through death to get to life.

Sometimes we have to die to our expectations, plans, dreams in life. Maybe things haven't gone the way we wanted or hoped. Maybe our plan didn't pan out with the kind of results we expected. Even though we feel stuck, we can resist death because we've become comfortable with stuck and we don't know what else to do-we're afraid.

Sometimes we're afraid to let go, afraid to die and that's why some of our relationships are paralyzed; maybe why your relationship with God is at a standstill; because we're afraid and we don't want to die. Maybe that's why some have never taken the first step with God. But the resurrection speaks to our fear of death; it addresses our compulsion to control. Look at verse 5.

[5] *But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid,* [Jesus knows we're afraid. And He's quick to address it and bring comfort] *for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.* [Mary is looking for a dead Jesus. Are we? Maybe we're afraid because we've begun to believe a lie. Or maybe Jesus isn't dead, just not strong, doesn't care, not good.]

[6] *He is not here, for he has risen,* [this is the best news ever] *as he said.* [Mark 10:33, all part of the plan, do not be afraid]. *Come, see the place where he lay.* [don't take my word for it, have a look]

[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.* [This is always how we encounter Jesus, He goes before us.]

[8] *So they [the Mary's] departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy,* [this is crazy stuff-earthquake, lightning dude, empty tomb, Jesus alive! fear but GREAT joy] *and ran to tell his disciples.*

[9] *And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!"* [rejoice and be glad! I'm alive, I'm with you.] *And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.* [They are so glad to see Jesus. Confused and emotional, in disbelief, but wasted no time loving on Jesus. This is faith-I don't know what's going on, but I want Jesus. And they embraced Him.]

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[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.”* [Jesus goes before us and then calls us to come. And those who come; those who follow Jesus and believe in Him no longer have to be afraid. He says, “you’re now my brothers/sisters. The sins you’ve committed, the big problem you had, I took care of that. You’re no longer accountable for those sins because I was punished for them on the cross. And when I rose from the dead I defeated your last enemy, death. Now you never have to fear because we are united. You never have to fear again!]

When you find hope; when you discover a loving Father, when you experience the security of a Risen Savior you don’t want to leave. Some of you have never known that kind of love, hope or security. For others, it’s been a long time since you’ve experienced Jesus this way. But He wants you to know His love, grace and power; He wants you to free you from the fear of dying so that you can experience the joy and peace of His life.

But fear and control hold you back. You say, I’m not good enough, I’ve messed up too much, I can’t trust, I’m afraid. But at some point we have to be able to look at our lives and admit that all the fear, control, managing doesn’t work. All the outcomes we’ve hoped for, even when we get them, they’re not what we expected; they don’t satisfy. The lie is that something other than Jesus will satisfy. The truth is that only Jesus can satisfy-He’s what you were made for.

But before you get to life, you have to go through death. So don’t be afraid and run to Jesus this morning, give Him everything.